

# MILITARY ILLUSTRATED

□ PAST & □

No. 18

April/May 1989

## Reconstructions:

Augustan Legionary  
23rd Foot, America, 1770s  
Eastern Front, 1944

Sudan 1898:  
The Mahdi's Warriors

Lord Cochrane,  
Frigate Captain Supreme

***New Series: DIEN BIEN PHU, 1954***



# MILITARY ILLUSTRATED

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No.18

ISSN 0268-8328

APRIL/MAY 1989

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## *Dien Bien Phu, 1954*

DENIS LASSUS Paintings by KEVIN LYLES

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## *23rd Regiment, Royal Welch Fusiliers in America* JAY CALLAHAM

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## *Waffen-SS Infantry, Eastern Front, 1944* Photographs by KEVIN LYLES & PETER AMODIO

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## *Gallery: Thomas Cochrane* PHILIP J. HAYTHORNTHWAITE Paintings by BRYAN FOSTEN

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Our cover illustration shows a reconstruction of a Waffen-SS rifleman armed with a StG44, Russian Front, late 1944 — see article, p.40.

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## EDITORIAL

We welcome to our pages in this issue **Jay Callaham**, who contributes a splendidly illustrated feature on the 18th century redcoat re-enactors of the 'Royal Welch Fusiliers in America'. Jay is a company commander in this organisation, whose invitation by the actual regiment to visit Britain this month to take part in the 300th birthday celebrations of the RWF is a significant compliment to the high standards of the group. If you can, West Country and Welsh readers should make every effort to see them during their visit. Jay, born in 1948, lives in Greensboro, NC, only two miles from the Guilford Courthouse battlefield. A corporate executive, he is also a major in the US Army Reserve. In our next issue, apart from information and photographs on officers, musicians, surgeons and camp-followers, Jay will also be providing some very useful information on the organisation and activities of the group, which British re-enactors should find helpful.

### British Model Soldier Society

The BMSS inform us that their 1989 'Spectacular' will be held on 15 July next at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, London W2 — close to Edgware Road underground station. Trading space, at £20 a table, is now being booked, and interested readers should apply to Peter Ledger at 145 South Park Drive, Ilford, Essex IG3 9AD.

### Hampshire Heritage Leisure Tours

This company inform us of an interesting series of 'theme breaks', combining tours of outstanding historical attractions with 'special interest' days devoted to sites of military, aviation and naval interest. The tours range from weekend breaks to seven-day programmes; and include sites such as Broadlands, the home of Lord Mountbatten, which contains many memorabilia of that remarkable man; Winchester, King Arthur's ancient capital; the *Mary Rose* and HMS *Victory* at Portsmouth; the D-Day



Jay Callaham

Museum; and Buckler's Hard preserved ship-building village. For details of the full range, contact Vincent Head at Hampshire Heritage Leisure Tours, PO Box 90, Southampton, Hants SO9 1AA.

### Third birthday — and beyond

This issue marks the end of our third year of publication. Our sincere thanks to all our subscribers, regular purchasers, stockists, advertisers and contributors for helping us maintain our standards — which, according to those of you who have been kind enough to return our recent questionnaire, most of you believe we have achieved. The response to the questionnaire has been gratifying in its size, and in its generally satisfied tone. We have noted your remarks, which are of great value to us; a detailed summary will be given in a future editorial.

Some of you ask for more of your particular interest, some for less of subjects which don't interest you — which suggests, when balanced out, that we have got it more or less right. We are delighted by the number of readers who write that they have bought 'MI' for articles on their particular interests, but finish up reading it cover to cover, and finding more than they expected in areas which they had previously neglected. We shall work hard to continue providing something, often, for all main areas of interest.

In the past we used to announce the planned contents of future issues. We stopped doing this when we got caught out by failures to deliver. We think it unwise to give too many details of our future plans to our

'competitors'; but a hint or two of major articles to come this year can't do any harm. In no particular order, then: we are preparing major articles for the 19th century colonial enthusiasts on Indian Mutiny, North-West Frontier, Maori Wars, American and Boer War subjects. We have two fascinating and scholarly contributions from an 'Ancient' expert in the pipeline; and three English Civil War features. We hope to bring you a major serial article on a British Napoleonic subject of the first importance, with some wholly new photographs supported by contemporary documentary research. Our regular pieces on First World War subjects will continue; and an important illustrated study of a Second World War British special forces subject will shed light on an under-published area of uniform research. For post-1945 students, a first-rate serial article will illustrate in unprecedented detail the uniform and equipment of a major US formation and in an important battle of the Vietnam War. Occasional pieces on interesting military aspects of the art, film and model worlds will continue to appear. We

hope you will stay with us as we advance into our fourth year; and that you will continue to help us by encouraging friends to subscribe, if necessary by dropping shillings into their beer . . .

### Errata

In 'MI' No. 16, 'The Old Red Coat', Peter Dervis inadvertently referred in his commentary to Fig. 7 to the '1907' uniform regulations. He asks us to point out that there were no such dated regulations; 1900, 1904 and 1911 are correct.

The Golden Helmet of King Charles VI of France — recently reconstructed from among fragments recovered from wells in the circular keep of the Cour Carrée of the Louvre, Paris. This reconstruction, and the original fragments, were displayed last month at Les Invalides as part of an exhibition entitled 'Casques Royaux' mounted by the Arms and Armour Dept. of the Musée de l'Armée and the Commission du Vieux Paris. The helmet's attribution to Charles VI was supported by surviving court documents of 1411.



### Video Releases to Rent:

'Young Winston'

(RCA/Columbia: PG)

'Lincoln'

(Braveworld: PG)

Richard Attenborough's *Young Winston* (1972) is based on Sir Winston Churchill's autobiographical *My Early Life — A Roving Commission*, first published in 1930. The film opens in India in 1897 when Churchill was assigned to the Malakand Field Force as a war correspondent for the *Pioneer* and *The Daily Telegraph*. He accompanies a punitive raid against a Pathan village, which is ambushed by tribesmen. Winston is temporarily cut off from his unit, but succeeds in dragging a wounded Sikh soldier to safety.

The film then reverts to Winston's childhood, at the point when he is first sent to boarding school at the

age of seven. His lack of academic success and his enthusiasm for military tradition result in him being sent to Sandhurst for a military career by his father, Lord Randolph Churchill (Robert Shaw). His criticisms of the army in his book *The Malakand Field Force* do not endear him to Sir Herbert Kitchener (John Mills). However, the influence of his mother (Anne Bancroft) enables him to join the 21st Lancers on the campaign in the Sudan in 1898.

The film recreates the battle of Omdurman and the British Army's last full-scale cavalry charge, intended as a mopping-up operation after the repulse of the main Dervish

army. The 21st Lancers charge Dervishes firing from the edge of a watercourse, only to discover hundreds massed below. In the confused fighting, Churchill's life was probably saved by his having acquired a Mauser 'broomhandle' automatic rather than relying on a sword.

The film also recreates the incident in 1899 during the Boer War, when Winston was again a war correspondent. He is invited to join a reconnaissance by an armoured train, which is derailed by the Boer guerrillas. Winston ignores his non-combatant status and attempts to organise a breakout, but is cap-

tured and becomes a prized captive. He escapes from the POW camp in Pretoria by train, and eventually crosses the border from Transvaal into Portuguese East Africa.

Inevitably, the film cannot dramatise every incident in a varied life. We do not see his first military experience in Cuba, nor his part in the major Boer War battle of Spion Kop. However, the film does portray the beginning of Winston's political career, from his first failed attempt to become MP for Oldham in 1899 to his eventual success three years later, and his first major speech in the House of Commons. Simon Ward bears a striking resemblance to the young Churchill, and the film benefits from good production values and location photography in Morocco.

After the portrayal of the Ameri-

## ON THE SCREEN



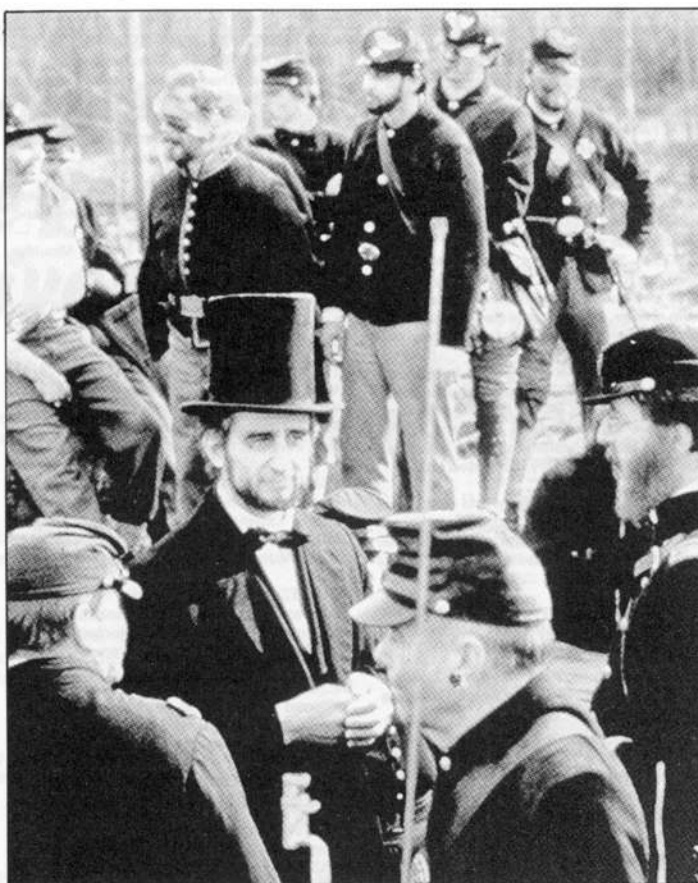
can Civil War as soap-opera in television mini-series such as *North and South* and *The Blue and the Grey*, I can happily report that Lamont Johnson's *Lincoln* is far superior. It is based on Gore Vidal's best-selling novel about Lincoln's presidency, and therefore spans the Civil War years.

The three-hour tape concentrates on the pressures upon Lincoln who, while trying to re-unite the Union, had to contend with rival politicians within his own cabinet, incompetent generals (some of whom were more interested in their own political aspirations), the death of a son, and a mentally unstable wife. Dramatising a novel of almost 900 pages necessitated the pruning of certain sub-plots, especially those concerning the background of the assassination conspirators. Sam Waterston does not have Lincoln's dominating physical presence, but he is well supported by Mary Tyler Moore as his wife Mary, Richard Mulligan as Secretary of State William Henry Seward, and John Houseman as General Winfield Scott. Costumes and interiors are adequate, and the production boasts a few brief small-scale battle scenes which utilise the services of living history re-enactment groups.

#### Video Releases to Buy: 'Classic War Movies'

(Warner Home Video)  
'Victory at Sea' (Trax)  
'Guns — the Gods of War'  
(GMH Entertainments)

Warner Home Video have recently released a batch of nine classic Second World War movies, whose titles will need little introduction to readers of 'MI'. They include three POW stories in the form of *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *The Colditz Story* (1954) and *The Great Escape* (1963); three aerial combat stories — *The*



Lincoln (Sam Waterston) visits Union troops at Fort Stevens in Lamont Johnson's *Lincoln*. The generally convincing appearance of the uniforms can be seen in this still from the video.

*Dam Busters* (1954), *633 Squadron* (1964), and *The Battle of Britain* (1969); land warfare is represented by *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958), and *A Bridge Too Far* (1977); and the naval war by *The Cruel Sea* (1952), based on Nicholas Monsarrat's famous novel. Between them they represent some of the best British movies made over three decades, and feature actors of the calibre of Richard Attenborough, Jack Hawkins, Anthony Quayle, Richard Todd, Sean Connery, Dirk

Bogarde, Lawrence Olivier, Steve McQueen and Robert Redford.

*Victory at Sea*, the award-winning American television documentary series about the naval aspects of the Second World War, has been released on 13 tapes, each lasting 50 minutes. The series was originally conceived and carried to its conclusion by Henry Saloman, a naval historian who had collaborated with Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison on the 14-volume *History of United States*

*Naval Operations in World War Two*. Although considerable effort was made to include the German and Japanese points of view, a series intended for an American audience inevitably has an American bias. Hence, when the series was broadcast by the BBC, each episode was preceded by a short introduction to give the British perspective. Nonetheless, the series set new standards for war documentaries, and benefited from a magnificent score by Richard Rogers. Almost 40 years after the series first appeared it still retains much of its original impact.

GMH Entertainment's latest release in their *Visions of War* series, *Guns — The Gods of War*, attempts a brief history of how the development of artillery was influenced by strategic and tactical necessity in the European theatres of both World Wars. Like its companion programme *The Tank*, it relies exclusively on archive footage selected from *Visnew's* extensive film library to illustrate the commentary. The intended audience is unclear: the subject matter is specialised, but the commentary can only be regarded as an introduction to the subject. What is essentially a technical subject would have benefitted considerably by the judicious use of diagrams and still photographs, and more efforts to ensure that the pictures matched the commentary. The subject matter is interesting, but the overall impression is of a production that was devised and executed in some haste. **Stephen J. Greenhill**

January 1989 could well prove to be an important month for military collectors as some of their interests were directly affected by important pieces of fresh legislation. Two new Acts — the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 — have serious implications for collectors, dealers and auction houses. Whether either Act will have any real effect in reducing criminal danger to the public (the proclaimed reason for their introduction) is a matter for doubt. Since we have reported the inevitable speculation about these measures during the progress of the Bills, it seems useful to outline their provisions as they affect collectors.

The Criminal Justice Act enabled the Home Secretary to issue an order which came into force on 18 January and declared certain weapons to be prohibited. This order makes it an offence to manufacture, sell or hire, expose or have in one's possession for the purpose of sale or hire, or lend or give to any person certain specified weapons. The schedule lists several martial arts articles, push daggers, swordsticks and knuckledusters or any weapons which incorporate such

## THE AUCTION SCENE

items. Thus from 18 January 1989 it has been impossible to collect some of the fighting knives of the Second World War special forces, and some trench knives of the First World War. Antique examples of all items included in the order are excluded from the prohibition, and the criterion to decide whether such pieces are antique is that of age. The Customs guideline of 100 years has been taken as the legal definition of 'antique'. The swordstick dated 1888 is quite legal, but one dated 1890 is not. If anybody tries applying this blanket definition of 100 years to firearms, they will almost certainly find themselves in dangerous waters.

Those with collections of prohibited knives can now do nothing with them except keep them (for it is no offence to possess them), or they may dispose of them to museums, since these bodies are permitted to acquire prohibited weapons. Presumably owners cannot even bequeath such collections to their heirs. Perhaps the collection can be held in

trust, provided the will makes it clear that First World War pieces may be disposed of legally in 2018, and Second World War items in 2045 — and not a day before...

The effect of the Firearms Amendment Act is likely to be mixed. For serious shooters and collectors it is depressing, for it will remove from their hands a whole range of interesting weapons. However, reconstruction photographers and re-enactment groups may benefit, since the Act makes provision for the official approval of de-activation. Provided the weapon is checked by the Proof Houses after it has been de-activated, and found satisfactory, it will be given an official stamp and will no longer be regarded as a firearm. Needless to say there will be a charge for this service; but at least such items can be owned without any certificates at all.

The approved methods of de-activation have not yet been officially defined, and some suggestions being mooted are pretty horrendous —

they even include welding up the trigger in addition to gutting the action. If such systems are adopted then it will be impossible to operate the weapon's action at all.

Smooth-bored weapons may well cause problems for collectors, for basically the new law states that a weapon retains its original category even if it has been converted. Thus rifles, such as the Lee Enfields of both World Wars, which have been converted to .410 shotguns and retain original magazines will still be considered as Section 1 firearms requiring a firearm certificate — a shotgun certificate will no longer suffice. If the magazine has been adapted to hold only two cartridges, it remains a shotgun. Single-shot rifles which have been converted will continue to be shotguns. If a machine gun or other weapon normally included in the Section 5 category — i.e. prohibited — has been converted, it remains a prohibited weapon and may not be held under any circumstances except with Home Office authority. Re-enactment groups with converted Bren guns or similar

continued on page 6



weapons will need to have them de-activated.

With the new act will go a volume of recommendations to chief police officers — it is not yet ready — and this sets out the guidelines which the Home Office would like them to follow. It does not have any legal authority, and chief constables may well ignore the suggestions — it is fairly certain that some will. The recommendations do stress that collecting should be considered a perfectly good reason for issuing a firearm certificate; but the practice of some forces of issuing a dealer's certificate to allow a collector to acquire items with a minimum fuss is to stop.

When these recommendations are finally agreed between the various bodies consulted and the Home Office they will, for the first time, be published. This could well help anybody who is refused a certificate or has any other problems with the police over firearms or shotguns, for they will be able to quote the guidelines or at least see what the police arguments are.

Leaflets should be available shortly which summarise the changes brought about by the new Firearms Act, and anybody who has any connection with firearms would be well advised to read and act on the leaflet. Another leaflet will give details of the 'buy-in' scheme which will be operated for those weapons which have to be surrendered. **Frederick Wilkinson**

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## LETTERS

### 16th century flasks and bandoliers

I very much enjoyed John Tincey's excellent article on the London Trained Bands ('M' No. 14). However, I am puzzled by the closing sentence in the commentary on the arquebusier in Richard Hook's superb illustration. The writer's conclusion that because the soldier has only one flask and no bandolier, he would be unable to 'accurately measure the charge' cannot be substantiated. If the flask was fitted with a spring cut-off (as depicted) then the spout itself forms the measure... If the flask had no cut-off then it is likely that the spout had a cap which also doubled as a measure. I cannot believe that a soldier would load with a charge that had not been measured in some way.

The lack of a smaller flask for fine priming is interesting. The Landsknecht arquebusiers in Burgkmair's 'The Triumph of Maximilian', c. 1520, are shown with both bandoliers and circular flasks which are probably primers. However, I am of the opinion that the powder of the day, whether corned or serpentine, would be readily ignited by the match. I have experimented with modern powder of all grades from fine to punt, and have found that if the match is burning well, ignition is no problem. Fine powder is only really important for sparking locks.

Finally, many congratulations on producing a magazine that must rank

as the best English language military history publication anywhere. I have never been disappointed with any article which I have read in it.

J.W.F. Harriman, BSc, ASVA  
Beeston, Nottingham

### The SA80 'Bullpup'

E.W.W. Fowler's article ('M' No. 15) is interesting, but appears to contain some errors of fact or interpretation. My understanding, supported by recent correspondence with the Curator, Weapons Museum, School of Infantry, is that the SA80's official designation is L85A1, not L24A1 (p.37).

I have a SUSAT sight, manufactured in June 1988. The pointer does not point downward (p.40) but upward...

The question of the effectiveness of the SS109 round (p.38) is a much debated matter. Extensive tests with a variety of 5.56mm and 7.62mm (see K. Hackathorn, 'Evaluating the M16A2', *Guns & Ammo*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1988) shows that the standard 7.62mm round is unequalled for either range or penetration by any 5.56mm ammunition, including the very effective Austrian SMI AP bullet...

Finally, what does 'six grooves, one turn in 180m' mean? Is the author implying that only one twist in 180 metres occurs? Surely not.

The magazine is beautifully produced. Keep up the excellent standard.

Ian A. Campbell  
Edmonton, Alberta

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# DIEN BIEN PHU

## (1) The Battle

DENIS LASSUS  
Paintings by KEVIN LYLES

Thirty-five years ago this month, one of the decisive battles of the modern world was raging in the valley of Dien Bien Phu in north-west Vietnam. This issue sees the first of a series of articles illustrating the uniforms of the French Union troops who earned a place in military legend by their heroic, doomed defence of that chaos of waterlogged trenches, flimsy dugouts and fire-swept hillsides. In this first article the author traces the course of the battle; and describes the main figures among the French command in the valley.

On 8 May 1954 newspapers around the world announced the fall of the entrenched camp of Dien Bien Phu, overrun at about 1700 hours the previous afternoon. The Western world reacted with consternation; but in fact, in well-informed circles, there had been few illusions about the eventual outcome since 30 March, when the Viet Minh army of General Vo Nguyen Giap had launched a general assault.

At Dien Bien Phu the morale of most of the fighting troops had remained surprisingly high; but they, too, had lost their illusions. Their resentment was directed as much towards the government and high command, who had sent them there without being able to give them the means to get out again, as towards the 'Viets'. The only people who had still believed that the situation was retrievable were civilians

### Right:

November 1953: left foreground, Gen. Cogny, commanding French forces in Tonkin and therefore the immediate command link for the camp, makes an 'owner's tour' of Dien Bien Phu with Gen. Gilles (behind Cogny) immediately after the re-occupation of the valley. He is shaking hands with Capt. Tourret, CO of the 8<sup>e</sup> Bataillon Parachutiste de Choc; but the paras in the background appear to be men of the 11<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes. (This, and all other photos not credited otherwise, ECP Armées).

thousands of kilometres away in France, who shuddered by their radios as news came of each loss among the strongpoints whose female code-names had become so poignantly familiar: 'Anne-Marie', 'Beatrice', 'Claudine', 'Dominique', 'Eliane'...

### WHY DIEN BIEN PHU?

For many years it has been the conventional standpoint to pose the exasperated question, 'But what were they

doing, planting a garrison at the bottom of that p\*\*\*ot?' To understand the answer requires study of the situation of the belligerents in Indochina at the end of 1953.

In France, constantly-changing governments had lacked a clear Indochina policy; and the Laniel government gave the impression of drifting towards abandonment. The military command were left without clear directives, their Expeditionary Corps stretched to its limit, and denied reinforcements. The 'Associated States' of Indochina, now threatened by an escalation of the war, hung back from committing themselves fully to the French Union effort.

Giap was clearly considering opening up a 'second front' in Laos, through the Thai Highlands which sprawl across the border between north-west Vietnam and northern Laos. Extended elsewhere, the French initially responded only by planting local French-led partisan groups as 'doorbells'. Were the generals to defend Laos, or not? And if so, with what?

Giap had known since the disaster at Vinh Yen in 1950

that his ultimate goal of taking Hanoi could not be achieved by direct confrontation without facing the French Army on terrain favourable to them, and close to their strongest bases in the Red River Delta. The second possibility was an initiative towards the south through Laos, where the Mekong River offered the only practicable axis of advance on Saigon. One or other of these offensives was unavoidable if the Viet Minh's war aims were to be furthered. While he considered his choices, Giap built up his strength with the aid of massive material aid from the Communist bloc; and extended his control over territory along





the Chinese frontier, penetrable by conventional forces only with great difficulty.

Fully aware of Giap's situation, the French commander-in-chief — Gen. Salan, succeeded by Gen. Navarre — decided to regain the initiative and frustrate Giap's most attractive strategic option by regrouping French resources in the Thai Highlands to 'bar the gates of Laos'. They apparently lacked any deep conviction that the ensuing battle would be decisive for either side. For lack of resources, they seem to have been content to set events in motion without thinking through the possible results in any detail.



December 1953: Col. Christian de Castries (left) had now replaced Gen. Gilles in command at DBP, and shows Gen. Cogny the garrison's progress in preparing positions.

**Below:**

November 1953: aerial view, looking south and slightly east, of the area which became the central sector of the camp. The timber and brush were completely cleared; much of it was too light to be useful for constructing solid overhead cover. By mid-March this whole area was bare mud, completely covered with dugouts, berms, tents, and dumps.

The C-47s are parked on the southern end of the airstrip; the dark line up its eastern edge is a drainage ditch, which became a vital highway out along the strip to the northern 'Anne-Maries' and 'Huguettes' during the siege, when movement above ground was suicidal. In the left background is the terraced hill with trees and a few

pale buildings which became 'Eliane 2', one of the most viciously contested strongpoints. Beyond it is 'Mont Chauve' ('Baldy'), and to the left the less marked feature 'Mont Fictif' ('Phoney'); these features were in enemy hands throughout the siege, and were the jumping-off points for many massed infantry attacks on the 'Elianes'; 'Baldy' was linked to the southern part of 'E2' by a saddle, and Viet support weapons were dug into both hillocks.

The photo emphasises not only the short ranges at which the battle was fought, but, more importantly, the slight differences of elevation between the strongpoints and the valley floor: the latter was at roughly 475m altitude, and the main strongpoints were only about 10m-20m higher. The 2<sup>e</sup> BEP's counterattack up the airstrip on 23 April took casualties from a machine gun installed in a wrecked C-46 occupied by the Viets: even a few feet of elevation could be vital.

'Baldy'

E2

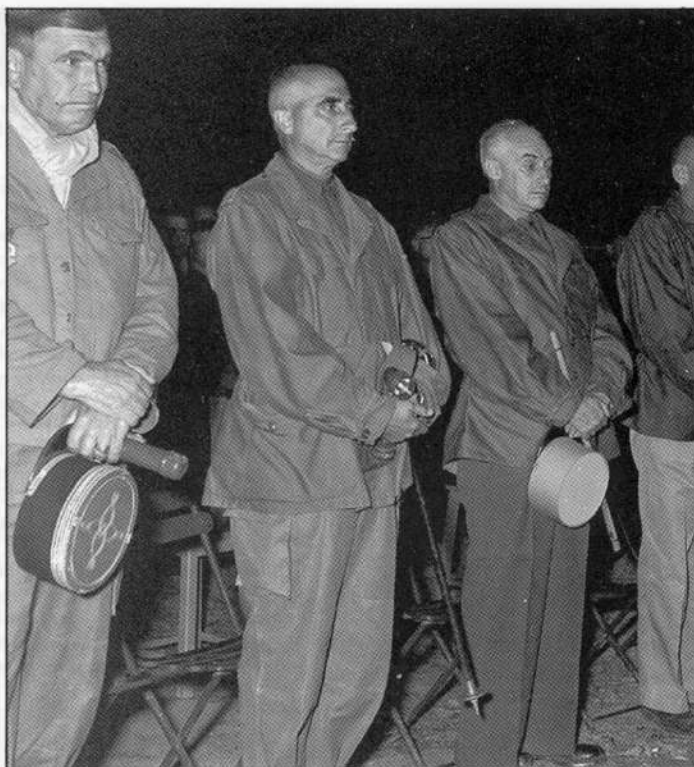




The visit of Gen. Navarre, C-in-C Indochina to DBP at Christmas 1953; De Castries is centre, Navarre right, and at left is Lt. Col. Gaucher, CO of the Legion's 13<sup>e</sup> Demi-Brigade. The loss of this tough, experienced commander in the first hours of the siege was a major blow. Jules Gaucher had served with the Legion since 1931, first seeing action in Morocco. He had served in Indochina from 1937 to 1947, and took part in the 5<sup>e</sup> REI's legendary fighting retreat from the Japanese in spring 1945. He was second-in-command of the 13<sup>e</sup> from September 1952, taking command shortly before Operation 'Castor'.

**Below:**

January 1954: a napalm strike (bottom right) by a Bearcat during French attempts to interdict the enemy build-up in the hills round DBP. This usefully illustrates the three main types of terrain: in the foreground a village of stilted huts can be made out, on the edge of rice-paddies; behind it there are dark areas of forest clinging to the jumble of hills, most of which are covered with thick, lighter-coloured brush.



The only practicable barrier to 'the gates of Laos' was Dien Bien Phu — a fertile valley some 16km long by 9km wide, traversed roughly north-south by the Nam Youm River and Provincial Road 41, set in the Thai Highlands some 300km by air from Hanoi, 150km from the Chinese border, and 20km north of the Laotian border. This small regional centre, cut off far from French-held territory and thus accessible only by air, was dominated on all sides by heavily wooded hills between 400m and 700m high (1,300 to 2,300ft.), and, more distantly, by mountains rising to 1,300m (4,250ft.). It had an old Japanese airstrip of rammed earth, which would need rebuilding to take heavy traffic. Abandoned by France a year beforehand during the Na San battles, DBP was currently the training base of Viet Minh Regt. 148.

#### OPERATION 'CASTOR'

The operation to recapture DBP began on 20 November 1953, under the command of Gen. Gilles, who had at his disposal two Groupements Aéroportés or parachute brigades, each of three battalions. GAP 1 dropped that morning: first the 6<sup>e</sup> BPC (Cdt. Bigeard; 650 men) with engineers of the 17<sup>e</sup> CGP and gunners of the GM/35<sup>e</sup> RALP, followed by the II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP (Cdt. Bréchignac; 570 men) and GAP 1 headquarters (Lt. Col. Fourcade). Cdt. Souquet's 1<sup>er</sup> BPC (720 men) and the GAP's other organic elements jumped that afternoon. VM Regt. 148, surprised at their training, reacted vigorously, and pulled out without suffering disastrous losses — II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP were dropped too far away to prevent this. By dusk the valley was in French hands.

On the 21st, GAP 2 dropped into Dien Bien Phu; the brigade commander, Lt. Col. Langlais, was injured, and casevac'd. The brigade consisted of Cdt. Guiraud's 1<sup>er</sup> BEP (650 men), accompanied by Gen. Gilles; the 8<sup>e</sup> BPC (Capt. Turrett; 650 men); and — arriving on the





After the initial surprise, Giap immediately decided where to make his major effort; and started his divisions on their epic forced march towards the Thai Highlands.

In early December the French improved the airstrip, and began flying in the units which would make up the permanent garrison of what was intended as a long-term base for wide-ranging offensive operations. 'Groupeement Opérationnel Nord-Ouest' was commanded by a cavalry colonel, Christian de Castries — apparently it had not been possible to find a general for the post . . .

The paras of GAP 1 pulled out, to be replaced progressively by infantry of the Foreign Legion (I/ and III/13<sup>e</sup> Demi-Brigade, I/2<sup>e</sup>Régt. d'Infanterie Étrangère, III/3<sup>e</sup>REI) and North African Rifles (II/1<sup>er</sup>Régt. de Tirailleurs Algériens, II/3<sup>e</sup>RTA, V/7<sup>e</sup>RTA, I/4<sup>e</sup>Régt. de Tirailleurs Marocains); locally recruited troops (Bataillons Thai Nos. 2 and 3); and various supporting arms and services (a squadron of M24 tanks from 1<sup>er</sup> Régt. de Chasseurs à Cheval; 105mm guns of II/4<sup>e</sup>Régt. d'Artillerie Coloniale and III/10<sup>e</sup>RAC, 155mm guns of II/IV/4<sup>e</sup>RAC; engineers of 31<sup>e</sup>Bataillon du Génie, etc.).

While the airlifts continued, and the valley was prepared as an entrenched camp protected by a loose ring of defended localities, strong columns struck out into the hills. An ominous sign of things to come was provided by the outcome of Operation 'Pollux', the planned withdrawal upon DBP of 2,000 French-led troops from the more northerly garrison of Lai Chau, who were to be met on the march by three para battalions from DBP. GAP 2 never made the link-up; they had a costly, five-day running battle before regaining the camp, and the Lai Chau column was wiped out. Other strong 'offensive reconnaissance' thrusts into the hills during December

Kevin Lyles' reconstructions overleaf illustrate:

**(1) Brigadier-General Jean Gilles, commander, French Airborne Forces Indochina.**

Born in the Pyrenees region in 1904, Gilles entered St. Cyr in 1922 in the same class as the future Gen. 'Leclerc'. Commissioned into the Colonial Infantry, he fought in Morocco and was decorated. In 1940 he fought in France as a captain in the 7th Colonial Infantry Division. Making his way to North Africa in 1942, he commanded II/13<sup>e</sup>Régt. de Tirailleurs Sénégalais in the famous 9th Colonial Inf. Div., with which he landed in southern France. The end of the war found him in Germany, second-in-command of his regiment, which was by now the 23<sup>e</sup>RIC. With this unit he went out to Indochina for his first tour in 1946; one of his company commanders was Capt. Bigeard. He returned to France to take command of the 1<sup>er</sup> DBCCP, the formation which trained Colonial Parachute units for deployment to Indochina. During his second tour in the Far East, Col. Gilles was given command of the defence of the 'airhead' at Na San, a strategically important position isolated in the Thai Highlands which was subjected to heavy attacks in winter 1952. The defence and maintenance of this camp were successful, if very costly in resources; and after holding the post for six months Gilles was rewarded with his general's stars. As commander of airborne forces, Gilles led the jump on Dien Bien Phu in November 1953; but he did not hide his lack of confidence in the high command plan, and recognised that it was facile to build too much on the victory at Na San, achieved under very different conditions. When Gen. Cogy visited the valley on 22 November, Gilles — a familiar figure on the DZ, buzzing around on a motor-scooter — asked Cogy to relieve him as soon as he could, and give him a job somewhere 'in the open air'. He left the valley within days; already troubled by a heart disorder, and at the end of his tour, he returned to France.

The one-eyed general stowed his glass eye in the pocket of his smock during jumps; he wore a modified version of the British wartime 'windproof' camouflage uniform — known as 'sausage skin' to the French paras, and popular in Indochina for its light, airy comfort. The smock had an added full-length frontal zip; and the trousers had a conventional fly, and two snap-fastened thigh pockets added to the outside legs. He wears the same beret and badge as Langlais; a US

web pistol belt; and US double-buckle boots. His only insignia is a black cloth strip bearing his two stars of rank buttoned to the chest of the smock.

**(2) Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Langlais, commanding officer, Groupeement Aéroporté 2.**

Born in 1909, this tense, wiry Breton graduated from St. Cyr in 1930. As a young subaltern he chose a hard posting: the Méharistes camel companies in the deep Sahara, where a lone officer could spend months on patrol with his native troopers. He too fought in France and Germany. His first tour in Indochina was as a young battalion commander with the 9th Colonial Infantry Division, and included the punishing street fighting in Hanoi in spring 1947. After a second tour he returned to France and passed the parachute course, taking command of the 1<sup>er</sup> DBCCP. This jungle-experienced combat commander led GAP 2 in the 21 November drop; and, when his broken ankle had barely healed, returned to DBP as commander of the parachute units there on 12 December.

On 24 March he took over operational command of the defence, backed by his unit commanders and with De Castries' agreement and co-operation. It was an obviously sensible move; and for the rest of the siege this lieutenant-colonel acted as battle commander of a force of 10,000 men. Known for his temper and his fierce devotion to his men, Langlais bore a crushing and heart-breaking task without flinching, earning the complete loyalty of his subordinates under the worst imaginable conditions. When the camp fell he burned his red paratrooper's beret rather than let the enemy take it.

Langlais wears the sand-khaki shirt with short-cut sleeves in which he was often photographed; the woven version of the paratroop brevet is sewn to the right breast, and the rank stripes of lieutenant-colonel (gold/silver/gold/silver/gold) are displayed on black shoulder slides. (When, on 15 April, he and other senior officers in DBP were promoted one grade by radio, De Castries inked over the red backing of his own colonel's stripes and gave them to Langlais.) He wears the mle.1947/52 camouflaged airborne fatigue trousers. (see 'MI' No.16, pages 27-34), and French mle.1950 jump-boots. Like De

Castries, he uses a US-type officer's narrow web belt. The red beret, with standard airborne troops' silver badge, was worn by all Metropolitan and Colonial paratroops in Indochina from March 1951.

**(3) Colonel Christian de la Croix de Castries, commanding officer, GONO.**

De Castries joined the army in 1922 at the age of 20, and graduated from the cavalry officers' school at Saumur; in the 1930s he was a noted competition rider. Captured by the Germans in 1940 after distinguishing himself in combat, Capt. de Castries escaped in March 1941; he reached North Africa, and served in the 3<sup>e</sup>Régt. de Spahis Marocains under the then-Col. Navarre. He fought in Italy, France and Germany as an armoured officer, being gravely wounded, and reaching the rank of chef d'escadrons. He served his first tour in Indochina in 1946-49; and was again seriously wounded during his second tour. He came out for his third tour in summer 1953; and was named commander of the Dien Bien Phu position — there was no noticeable jostling for the post among generals. De Castries' record as a much-decorated, dashing, stylish cavalryman was unquestionable; an aristocrat of ancient military family, he was a gambler, a great lover of women, and a man of notable charm.

De Castries was made the public scapegoat for the disaster in the aftermath of Dien Bien Phu. Much was made of his abdication of day-to-day operational command in favour of Langlais; and a comment by the latter to the court of enquiry, to the effect that De Castries' rôle had been 'to transmit my messages to Hanoi', was to haunt him ever after. But many accounts confirm that his contribution was considerable, and Langlais never wavered in his friendship and apparent respect for an officer who was selected for a battle which was never fought — the offensive, mobile command envisaged by the planners.

Photos show him wearing the dark khaki shirt and the M1947 combat fatigues, with canvas and rubber 'pataugas'. The five gold rank stripes of colonel are worn on the red shoulder slides of his branch, the Spahis. His all-red Spahi side-cap bears rank chevrons, two buttons, and on the left front a mid-night blue diamond bearing the gold five-point 'Sherifian star' of the Moroccan Spahis. He normally affected a red silk scarf, and a shooting-stick.

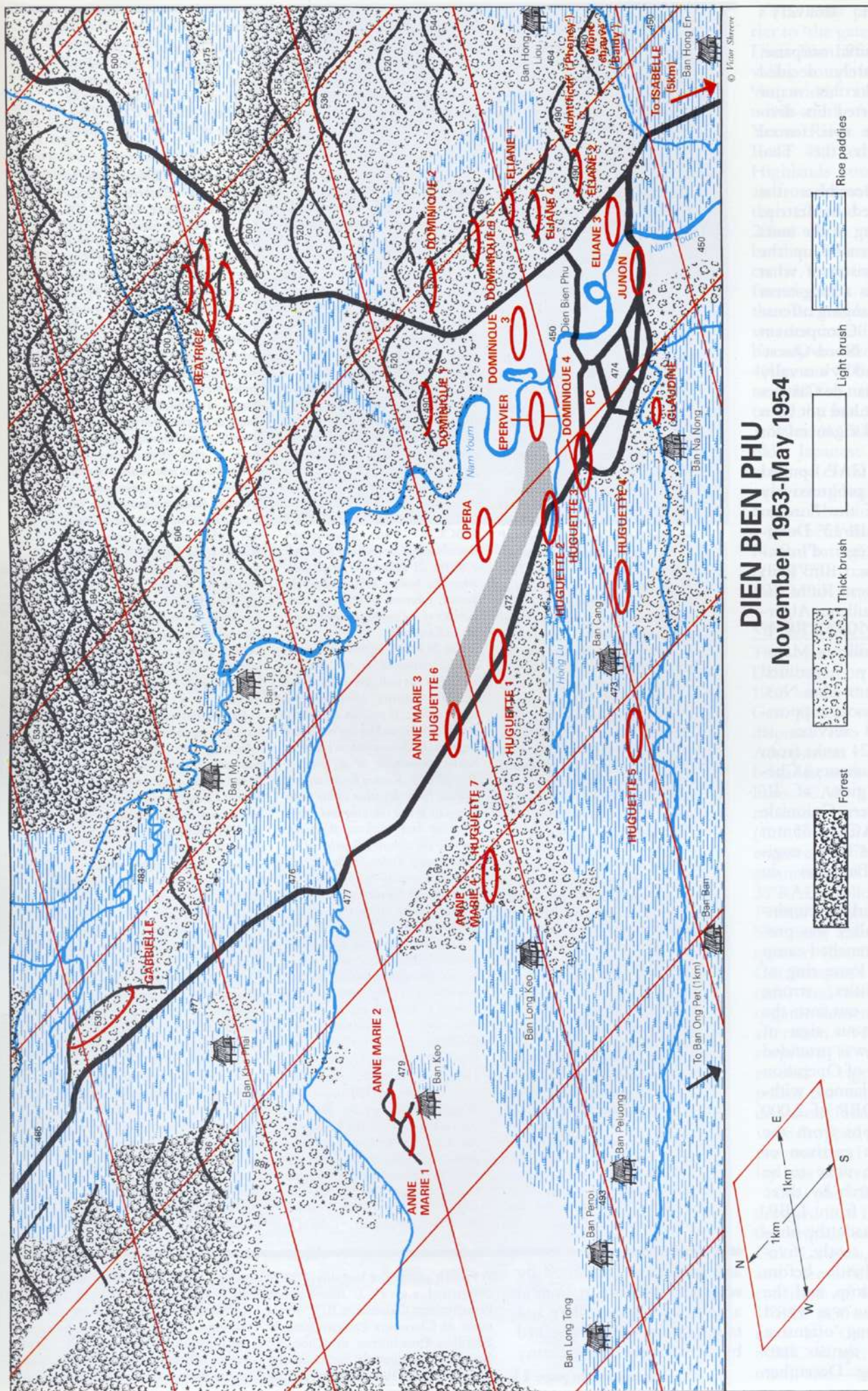
and January — mounted by several first-class battalions at a time, with air, artillery and tank support — were checked by increasingly strong enemy

continued on page 13

(1) French parachute battalions were designated, e.g.: 1<sup>er</sup>, 6<sup>e</sup> Bataillons de Parachutistes Coloniaux; II/1<sup>er</sup> Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes; 8<sup>e</sup> Bataillon Parachutiste de Choc; 1<sup>er</sup> Bataillon Étranger de Parachutistes; 5<sup>e</sup> Bataillon de Parachutistes Vietna-

miens. The Metropolitan units, II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP and 8<sup>e</sup> BPC, had one locally-recruited company each, as did the Foreign Legion battalion; the Colonial battalions had two each. These were official proportions: in fact many units were half Vietnamese.





**Above:** General arrangement of Dien Bien Phu, presented as an aerial view from the southwest. Spot heights are shown in metres; and we have added a grid of one-kilometre squares, for added clarity. No attempt has been made to mimic the actual shape on the ground of individual strongpoints, which were very irregular, and for which sources are contradictory. (Map from research by the author)



forces. Denied their planned freedom of movement in the Highlands, the French fought an escalating series of encounter battles on the valley floor itself during January and February.

### THE TRAP CLOSES

By a superhuman effort, Giap's troops (and the scores of thousands of volunteer and press-ganged coolies upon whom his logistics depended)

completed during February a near-total investment of the valley. Hundreds of miles of track were built or enlarged, camouflaged, and maintained, while troops, disassembled artillery, and every

kind of supplies for a corps-strength army struggled through the jungle hills under constant threat of air attack.

Almost the whole of Giap's field army, the 'Chuc Luc', was deployed in the hills



(1) Brigadier-General Jean Gilles, commander, French Airborne Forces Indochina.

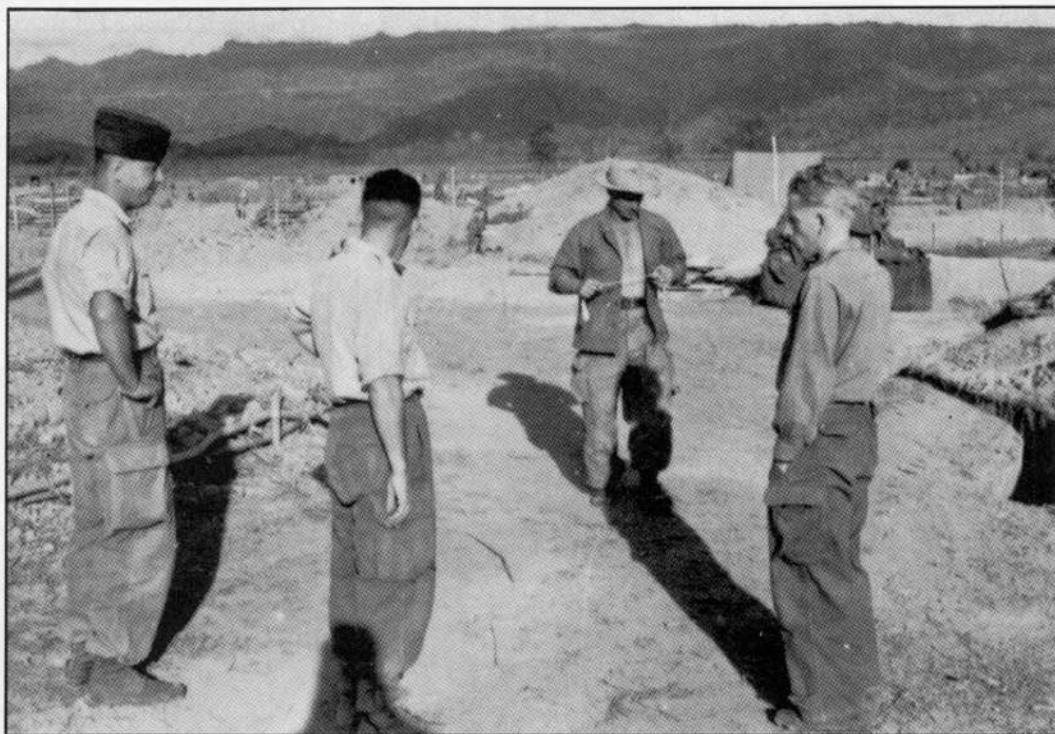
(2) Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Langlais, commanding officer, Groupement Aéroportée 2.

(3) Colonel Christian de la Croix de Castries, commanding officer, GONO



Early 1954: in strongpoint 'Isabelle' the ground has been cleared and trenches dug to link the bunkers. *Légionnaires* of the III/3<sup>e</sup> REI wear the dark khaki M1947 combat fatigues, with various khaki shirts, the pale khaki bush-hat, and (left) the Legion's green and red sidecap.

'Isabelle', 6km south of the main camp, guarded the exit of Route 41 from the valley, and an auxiliary airstrip (which became unusable even before the main airstrip). Commanded by Lt. Col André Lalande, the much-decorated and very able veteran of Narvik, the Western Desert, Italy and NW Europe who led the 3<sup>e</sup> REI, it was a quarter-square-mile position in a bend of the Nam Youm. Apart from the Legion battalion it held Algerians of the II/1<sup>er</sup> RTA, and later survivors of the V/7<sup>e</sup> RTA; about 400 Thais of various units; three Chaffee tanks, and eleven 105mm guns. Completely isolated by 30 March, it owed its survival until the end of the siege to Lalande's insistence on genuinely shell-proof bunkers. The difficulty of air-dropping to such a small target meant that 'Isabelle' suffered even worse shortages of every necessity than the main camp. But it was from here that the last shells were fired; and from here that the only organised break-out was attempted, on the night of 7/8 March. The spearhead got 9km before being trapped. (Private collection)



around the camp: the VM 308th, 312th and 316th Divisions, part of the 304th, and — most significantly — his artillery, concentrated in the 351st Heavy Division. The French gravely underestimated his strength in guns, and his ability to transport, install, conceal, and supply them. His 28 infantry battalions were well supplied and supported with light automatics, machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles. Total gun strength was around 200 pieces of 75mm and 105mm — plus a completely unsuspected flak regiment of 37mm guns, trained and at least partly manned by Communist Chinese.

It is not clear at what stage the French command began to think of DBP less as a base for offensive action and more as the 'anvil' on which French firepower would break Giap's regular divisions: presumably by 17 February, when the cost of further large-scale sorties was declared unacceptable. The confidence bred by a garrison of (by mid-March) some 10,870 men, with 10

tanks, 24 × 105mm and four 155mm guns, strong heavy mortar elements, and six on-base Bearcat fighter-bombers, apparently silenced any doubts which may have been expressed about the camp's suitability for the latter rôle.

A continuous perimeter would have required four times the available 12 battalions. The loose system of defended localities, code-named after girls in alphabetical order, typically consisted of mutually supporting strongpoints — earth trenches protected by inadequate wire 'cattle-fencing' and insufficient mines, the bunkers for command posts and support weapons thinly constructed of timber and sandbags. Airlift capacity was far too limited to fly in adequate engineer stores for overhead cover from strong field artillery. But Giap was not believed to have strong artillery; and any which revealed itself was expected to be silenced without trouble by counter-battery fire and air attack.

During January Giap manoeuvred skillfully in Laos, tying down French reserves; but the monsoon season was approaching, and if he was to achieve his necessary victory by the end of May he had to grasp the

nettle soon. The French command showed no sign of realising that the coming battle would be decisive, and failed to use this precious time to concentrate their whole effort on Dien Bien Phu.

On 31 January the Viet artillery began a harassing fire on the camp, and upon the airstrip which was its only lifeline. During February the camp's batteries, the French air force, and strong infantry sorties attempted to find and silence the enemy guns. They failed; Viet Minh mastery of concealment was frustratingly complete. Shelling took a steady toll of men and machines in the weeks that followed.

By mid-March Giap had concentrated a force which may have totalled more than 100,000 troops and logistic personnel. This ten-to-one ratio seems less impressive when seen against the comparison of actual infantry battalions — 28 to 12. But perhaps half the French garrison's total strength represented 'mouths' but not 'bayonets', in a camp dependent on air supply; and the imbalance in artillery, notionally cancelled out to some extent by French air power, would become crucial when the heavy monsoon rains and mists of late March blinded the air force.

### THE SIEGE BEGINS

At 1700hrs. on 13 March 1954 a massive artillery bombardment fell upon the camp. It had been expected — its weight had not. Command posts came under particularly heavy fire. Aircraft scrambling to leave the strip came under fire from carefully-sited AA guns to the north. By 1815hrs. Cdt. Pegot of the III/13<sup>e</sup> DBLE on 'Beatrice' reported fanatically determined infantry attacks. By 1830 he no longer answered his radio. The first two 105mm guns were knocked out in the camp as they fired in support: throughout the siege the gun crews, in their open pits, would take particularly heavy casualties.

As Lt. Col. Gaucher, CO of the 13<sup>e</sup> DBLE and commander of the central sector defences, tried to co-ordinate the defence over company links, a shell penetrated his command post, mortally wounding him and other staff officers. That night 'Beatrice' was overrun; a delayed counterattack the next morning stalled far short of the objective. A Legion battalion had been smashed in just six hours, with 60% fatalities.

On 14 March the Vietnamese paras of the 5<sup>e</sup> BPVN were dropped over the valley once more, to replace the lost battalion. That night the



strongly fortified and defended 'Gabrielle' position suffered the same fate as 'Beatrice': massive bombardment, followed by mass infantry attacks after dark. The Algerians of the V/7<sup>e</sup> RTA resisted stoutly, but took heavy losses; and the survivors — confused by garbled radio traffic, and by the loss of key officers — fell back in the early morning of the 16th, just in time to meet and disorganise a counterattack which was itself stalled and nervous under heavy fire. Its major component was the tired 5<sup>e</sup> BPVN, whose CO (now Capt. Botella) purged part of his unit during a bitter post mortem; it should be said that the rest of the unit fought heroically thereafter.

Morale was severely shaken by the loss of the two vital northern positions, and two good battalions, in 36 hours. Gaucher's death disoriented the command staff; the artillery commander, Piroth, committed suicide, and the chief-of-staff had a nervous breakdown. That night Thai troops of BT 3 slipped away through the wire. The mood improved with the air-dropping on the 16th of Bigeard's 6<sup>e</sup> BPC; but the Thais continued to desert. 'Anne Marie 1' and '2' were abandoned, '3' and '4' being retitled 'Huguette 6' and '7'.

Though Giap did not immediately exploit his gains — his artillery expenditure had exceeded his plans — he was able to tighten the ring of batteries and flak positions significantly. The airstrip was still usable, but at great risk.

Viet approach trenches could be seen snaking towards the remaining strongpoints. Attempts to maintain contact with the far southerly strongpoint 'Isabelle' now proved so costly that from the end of the month it would be forced to fight its own lonely battle for survival, contributing nothing to the defence of the main camp except artillery shoots.

On 24 March Lt. Col. Langlais of GAP 2 took over all operational command of the defence, with Bigeard as his deputy for setting up counterattacks by the paras of the always overstretched central reserve. The first was highly successful, and raised morale by its vindication of an aggressive spirit. On 28 March 6<sup>e</sup> BPC and 8<sup>e</sup> BPC led a thrust out to the west, destroying flak nests at Ban Ban and Ban Ong Pet.

Since shelling finally closed the airstrip that day, the camp would now depend entirely on air-drops for supplies and replacements; and the hard-pressed transport squadrons faced mounting losses from intense flak which soon forced them to 6,500ft., and later 8,500ft. — thus ensuring that much vital matériel fell outside the shrinking perimeter. Gathering in the drops, under a fire which made daylight movement above ground increasingly lethal, was complicated by the depredations of the 'rats of the Nam Youm' — hundreds of 'internal deserters' from broken units, mainly non-European, who lurked in caves along the river

banks and emerged to forage after dark. Their numbers may have reached 2,000 by the end of the siege.

### 'The Battle of the Five Hills'

The pause in major Viet infantry attacks ended on the night of 30 March, when a very intense period of fighting for the eastern strongpoints of 'Dominique' and 'Eliane' began; it would last until 4 April, without respite, and would cost both sides dear. It was characterised by heavy dusk bombardments followed by 'human wave' infantry attacks. Lost positions were vigorously counterattacked by scratch forces — typically, two or three companies from different para and Legion battalions, 'odds and ends' of broken units, and sometimes two or three of the dwindling inventory of Chaffee tanks. The main events were as follows:

**30/31 March:** 'Dominique 1', '2', '5' overrun. 'Eliane 1' and part of 'E2' lost; latter retaken.

**31 March:** Counterattacks retook 'D2' and 'E1', but unable to consolidate, and positions abandoned again; front line remained 'D3', 'E2', 'E4'.

**31 March/1 April:** Mass attacks on 'E2' fought off. In west, loss and recapture of 'Huguette 7'.

**1/2 April:** Mass attacks on 'Huguette 6' and '7'; latter reinforced and held with difficulty. First elements of II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP dropped over camp — it would take three nights to complete insertion. (This grudging reinforcement by

'penny packets' barely replaced immediate losses, and prevented the garrison seizing the initiative at any point. Replacements for specialist personnel, e.g. gun and tank crews, never kept pace with losses.)

**2 April:** 'Huguette 7' abandoned. Counterattack retook lost parts of 'E2'.

**2/3 April:** Enemy regained parts of 'E2'. (The main axis of the fighting on 'E2' was the spine between northern and southern positions, with Viet infantry pouring across from 'Baldy'.)

**3/4 April:** 'H1' and 'H6', almost surrounded by enemy trenches, held thanks to successful counterattack up airstrip.

**4/5 April:** 'H6' held against major assault; reinforcements held Viets in contact until dawn, when artillery and air strikes inflicted heavy losses.

The pressure of infantry attacks now eased briefly. The attackers had sustained very heavy casualties — perhaps 10,000 since 13 May — and reverted to trench warfare, pushing forward their saps between the French strongpoints in a deadly spider-web.

The next three weeks were characterised by fighting which increasingly resembled the Western Front in 1915-18.

*One of the eastern positions, almost certainly on the 'Elianes'; beyond are a line of hills of c.780m, and a skyline of c.1,200m mountains. The soldiers at right middleground give scale to this featureless hilltop, cleared of brush and seamed with trenches and pits. It is easy to imagine why attacks across such features were so costly.*





Perhaps the most famous photo to come out of Dien Bien Phu: a conference of paratroop commanders in Langlais' CP. Left to right: cut by left edge, Cdt. Maurice Guiraud, CO 1<sup>er</sup> BEP and later, Composite Foreign Parachute Battalion; Capt. André Botella, CO 5<sup>e</sup> BPVN; Cdt. Marcel Bigeard, CO 6<sup>e</sup> BPC, and Langlais' deputy for counterattacks; Capt. Pierre Tourret, CO 8<sup>e</sup> BPC; Lt. Col. Pierre Langlais, CO GAP 2, and later operational commander of the camp; and Cdt. Hubert de Séguins-Pazzis, chief-of-staff, GAP 2.



The enemy trenches ate steadily into the camp, isolating thinly-held strongpoints from the main central positions. The monsoon rains, which had begun in earnest on 29 March, were turning the valley into a swamp of orange mud, into which shell-battered trenches and bunkers slowly melted. Vicious night raids and patrol encounters and steady shelling from the slopes which dominated all movement below, took an increasing toll. Air-drops failed to keep pace with expenditure of food, ammunition, medical supplies, and personnel. The enemy flak remained deadly.

On 9 April the first elements of the 2<sup>e</sup> BEP were dropped. Next day a brilliant attack retook 'Eliane 1', and it was held against the enemy's vicious reaction. There was heavy fighting around 'Huguette 1' and '6' between 14 and 18 April; enemy trenches now cut them off, and on the night of the 17th/18th the whole reserves had to be committed to breaking a path for the garrison of 'H6' to withdraw, with only limited success. 'Huguette 1' fell to direct assault on 22/23 March. On the 23rd a counterattack up the airstrip to retake it by the now-complete 2<sup>e</sup> BEP went badly wrong, sustaining such heavy casualties that the survivors of the two Legion parachute battalions were amalgamated on 25 April.

The plight of the wounded was by now appalling. The dedicated Dr. Grauwin was able to offer only the most basic care in an underground hospital consisting of dark, partly flooded dug-outs. Many seriously wounded

men preferred to return to their positions after treatment — even recent amputees.

Apart from the II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP, the 2<sup>e</sup> BEP, and — in the final days of the siege — part of the 1<sup>er</sup> BPC, reinforcements during this period also included nearly 700 individual volunteers who made their first parachute jump over the camp, after minimal instruction. In all, nearly 2,600 men volunteered for this ordeal, including 450 Arabs and Africans, and 95 Vietnamese.

It is impossible not to wonder if the outcome might have been different if the three fresh parachute battalions had been committed to the camp in a single operation in late March or early April. Even the forces then in the camp inflicted terribly costly setbacks on Giap's infantry, whose falling morale is documented. What might not have been achieved by the arrival of a fresh brigade?

In the last days of April the southern 'Huguettes' were held by the Legion paras; 'Claudine' by the I/2<sup>e</sup> REI; 'Eliane 2' by I/13<sup>e</sup> DBLE; the rest of 'Eliane' by parts of II/1<sup>er</sup> RCP, 5<sup>e</sup> BPVN, and 6<sup>e</sup> BPC; the rump of 'Dominique' by troops of the 6<sup>e</sup> BPC, and some Algerians; and 'Epervier' by remnants of the 5<sup>e</sup> BPVN and 8<sup>e</sup> BPC. Odds and ends of Moroccan, Thai and Legion units plugged the gaps.

#### Into the darkness

The night of 30 April and the next day saw heavy fighting around 'Huguette 5'. That night a massive bombard-

ment blanketed and sealed 'Dominique 3' and 'Eliane 1'; and by 0200hrs. on the 2nd, both had been overrun by massed infantry assault, completely outflanking 'E2' and 'E4'. That same night 'Huguette 5' was also swamped. On the night of 2/3 May some 100 men of the 1<sup>er</sup> BPC were parachuted in, and another 150 on 3/4 May; it took them six hours to crawl up to positions on 'Eliane', just a mile from their assembly point. As the paras struggled through the mud, the 80 Moroccans and légionnaires in 'Huguette 4' were wiped out by some 3,000 Viet attackers — but not before their bitter resistance so demoralised the enemy that two Viet battalion commanders were relieved of command under fire . . .

The night of 4/5 May brought another 74 men of the 1<sup>er</sup> BPC, and Langlais shifted his reeling survivors to stiffen the 'Elianes' with these fresh troops. Minor infantry attacks on eastern and western strongpoints on the 6th were followed at dusk by very heavy artillery fire. At 1845hrs. all-out infantry assaults were launched, first on the 'Elianes', then on 'Claudine'. Despite heroic resistance and local counterattacks, the eastern hill positions were overwhelmed, as was most of 'Claudine'. The morning of 7 May brought the realisation that the only faint hope remaining was for a limited break-out by the fittest men; but new Viet positions to the south soon killed

even that illusion.

After radio contact with Hanoi, the newly-promoted Gen. de Castries announced a cease-fire to take effect from 1730hrs. that afternoon. After 56 days, silence fell at last over the shell-churned garbage-dump in the mud which had been the proud 'base aéro-terrestre' of Dien Bien Phu.

\* \* \*

Reliable statistics are hard to come by. Bernard Fall, in his epic account *Hell In A Very Small Place*, presents his own tables after analysis of official figures from both sides. Viet dead are quoted at 7,900, with about 15,000 wounded. Given that the entire Viet army at DBP had just seven qualified doctors, the latter figure probably includes many who died of their wounds.

Some 16,540 French Union troops fought at DBP between November 1953 and May 1954. About 2,200 are known to have died there, and many of the 1,700 or so listed as missing can be added to the dead with virtual certainty. The total for wounded was about 6,450. At the time of the cease-fire about 860 wounded were repatriated direct. Between 6,000 and 7,000 able-bodied or 'lightly wounded' men (many of them, in fact, severely wounded) marched into Viet captivity. About 2,000 would be repatriated after the Geneva accords some months later; about 1,000 more, Foreign Legion prisoners from countries now under Communist rule, were sent back to them, and to an uncertain fate. The remaining men, between 4,000 and 5,000 (depending upon how many of the 'missing' had been captured earlier), died either on the death-marches or in the Viet camps.

Just 78 of the garrison, including 19 Europeans, successfully evaded capture and reached French lines some 180km away. MI

**To be continued:** Part 2 will describe and illustrate the uniforms of the parachute battalions.



## Re-enactment:

# 23rd Regiment, Royal Welch Fusiliers in America (1)

JAY CALLAHAM

April 1989 sees the tercentenary of the Royal Welch Fusiliers; and to add a further note of colour and tradition to the ceremonies planned to take place at Wrexham, Powys Castle, Caernarfon Castle and Conwy, 1RWF have paid a notable compliment to a group of American re-enactors. The '23rd Regiment of Foot, Royal Welch Fusiliers in America' — seen in England in August 1987 during a memorable visit by a number of similar groups — have been invited to return, to help today's Fusiliers mark their regiment's 300th anniversary. This article, by an officer of the 23rd Regt., RWFIA, describes the real regiment's service in the American Revolution, and the uniforms and kit reproduced by the re-enactors.

Part 1 deals with the rank-and-file.

(A) Fusiliers — the frizzens of their muskets covered with white safety-stalls — are inspected by a Fusilier sergeant, right. Note the slightly brighter scarlet of his coat, his plain white lace and his sash.





There is no single explanation as to why grown men and women dress up in costume and devote a great deal of time and money to 'playing soldiers'. All are serious students of military history who have discovered that recreating the lifestyle of a given period is a wonderful way to learn about, and to appreciate, the sacrifices and achievements of their ancestors. Many dedicated re-enactors are also eager to present educational programmes to demonstrate how things really were, rather than letting the 'Hollywood' image prevail. The main reason why they do it is, of course, that it is fun.

The reasons why Americans should choose to represent the army of King George III are more complex. Some are true Anglophiles who are proud of their heritage, and show it. Many simply enjoy the novelty of 'playing the other side'; others are attracted by the brilliant uniforms, the crisp drill, and the pomp and ceremony of an 18th century professional army. The number of reasons probably equals the number of individual participants.

The Royal Welch Fusiliers in America had their beginnings in the Centennial celebrations of the American Civil War, paradoxically enough. Re-enactment units were formed under the sponsorship of various states which provided troops during that war. Unfortunately, the quality of uniforms, drill, camps and necessities was — with a few exceptions — very poor in terms of authentic re-creation. Incorrect materials, patterns, weapons and drill were common, as was inappropriate behaviour. Both the serious participants, and the viewing public, were short-changed. After the Civil War Centennial many began to look forward to the American Revolution Bicentennial, and were determined to present it in a more professional and realistic manner.

**Above:**  
From left to right: sergeant of Fusiliers, Fusilier, and Drummer of the 'Royal Welch Fusiliers in America'. (All photographs courtesy of the author.)



professional and realistic manner.

Two men, David Cole and William Draper, decided to re-create a regiment representing the British redcoat. The question they faced at once was: which regiment? They took as criteria a good war record, preferably including service in most of the major campaigns and battles; and an impressive uniform. David Cole researched the service records of the 63 Foot, Horse and Artillery regiments which served in America during the war by consulting various historical publications and contacting museums and

regimental associations. Bill Draper researched uniforms by studying works such as *Uniforms of the American Revolution* by Lefferts; the Royal Warrants of 1768; museum examples; inspection returns, newspaper descriptions of deserters' costume, and other written sources.

After months of independent research, they met to compare results. One regiment stood out: the 23rd Regiment of Foot, Royal Welch Fusiliers.

#### WAR SERVICE OF THE 23rd FOOT

The 23rd was formed in 1689 when Henry, Lord Herbert

of Chirbury raised a regiment for service in the Irish and Flemish campaigns. The regiment shed its first blood in the Battle of the Boyne; and was in action throughout the siege of Namur. Under Marlborough the 23rd fought at the Schellenberg, Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet.

In the mid-18th century the 23rd saw action at Dettingen (1743) and at Fontenoy two years later. In 1756 they were among the units surrendered as a result of the fall of Minorca to Marshal Richelieu. Two years later they were in action against the French once again, in attacks



on the French coast; and in 1759 the 23rd was one of the six British infantry regiments which routed the French cavalry at Minden, earning (but choosing not to exercise) the privilege of wearing a red rose in their headgear in commemoration of Minden every 1 August.

#### To America

Arriving in the American colonies in 1773, the 23rd served throughout the Revolutionary War. The regiment's flank companies fought at Lexington and Concord in the first days of the war in mid-April 1775; and the battalion companies formed part of Lord Percy's relief column. The Royal Welch Fusiliers fought again in the Battle of Charlestowne Heights or Breed's Hill (erroneously called Bunker Hill) on 17 June. They endured the siege and, in March 1776, the evacuation of Boston. The New York campaign of that year saw the 23rd in action at Long Island (27 August), White Plains (28 October), and Fort Washington (16 November).

In 1777 the 23rd fought in the victories at Brandywine (11 September) and Germantown (4 October). The next year brought further bloodshed at the significant battle of Monmouth, which was one of the first occasions on which Washington's Continental regulars proved

themselves equal to the redcoats in pitched battle (28 June). Within a matter of weeks the 23rd were on board ship, acting as marines with Lord Howe's fleet as it manoeuvred against D'Estaing's French force off Newport, Rhode Island. The regiment took part in the raid on Danbury, Connecticut; and participated in the capture of Stoney Point on 31 May 1779.

During the southern campaign of 1780 the 23rd took part in the capture of Charleston, South Carolina in May — perhaps the worst American disaster of the war. They continued to serve in the south under Lord Cornwallis, some companies being deployed as garrison troops, and a three-company battalion fighting at Camden in mid-August. The regiment later saw action at Polk's Hill. During the race to the Dan River in pursuit of the rebel general Daniel Morgan after his brilliant victory over Tarleton at Cowpens on 17 January 1781, the 23rd fought at the Catawba Crossing, and in many skirmishes. Their next major battle was the bloody victory at Guildford Court House on 15 March; here the Royal Welch Fusiliers suffered almost 25% casualties. It was during this battle that Sgt. Roger Lamb of the 23rd saved Lord Cornwallis from certain capture or death by

grabbing his bridle and leading him to the British lines when he was about to ride into the middle of a Rebel unit in wooded country.

After a period of rest and refitting the 23rd accompanied Cornwallis to Yorktown, where it was reunited with its light company from New York. The Royal Welch Fusiliers took part in the action at Greensprings, and provided men to ride as dragoons with Lt. Col. Tarleton's British Legion in his capture of part of the Rebel Virginia Assembly at Charlottesville.

During the siege of Yorktown in September–October 1781 the 23rd, with a small detachment of marines, held one of the forward redoubts against heavy odds: it is still known as Fusilier's Redoubt in their honour. When Lord Cornwallis ordered his army to lay down their arms on 19 October two officers of the 23rd — upon being informed that the regimental colours were to be surrendered cased — concealed the colours on their bodies and surrendered bare poles concealed by cases. The colours were never taken, and were smuggled home when the regiment was repatriated in 1783.

The Royal Welch Fusiliers thus fought in every major campaign of the war except the Burgoyne expedition.

#### THE UNIFORMS

To portray the 23rd Regiment of the 1770s–80s required much research to determine how they really looked, rather than merely how they should have looked. A Fusilier on garrison duty in Boston in 1775



One of several styles of forage cap worn by members of the re-created regiment. This classic 'nightcap' is red with a blue band and white tassel. Typically, such items were made from worn-out regimental uniforms.

#### Below:

Detail of the cap plate worn by Fusiliers and Grenadiers; and rear view of Fusilier cap, showing collar detail, and hair dressed in the so-called 'grenadier's bob'.





would have presented a very different appearance six years later on campaign in the Carolinas and Virginia. The uniforms went through a continual process of small changes due to logistics and field adaptations. For example, the bayonet carriage worn around the waist early in the war was hung over the shoulder during the later campaigns. The officers of the re-created regiment selected the garrison uniform of 1775 as the standard; and uniforms and kit are made to resemble those of the 18th century as closely as research can document, and modern sources of supply will allow.

Each regiment at that time had ten companies: eight battalion companies, one grenadier company and one light infantry company.

### Fusilier Companies

The most obvious distinguishing mark of a Fusilier regiment was the wearing of bearskin caps by the battalion ('Fusilier') companies, the bearskin being a symbol of distinction ordinarily reserved in Line regiments for the grenadier company.

#### Headgear

The re-created uniform begins with the Fusilier cap: a 10in. tall black bearskin — fur combed upwards — with a front plate of white metal. The plate is stamped in a mold with the king's cypher, crown, helm, and a scroll bearing the motto '*Nec Aspera Terrent*'. These features stand out in white metal, the flat of the plate being japanned black. The red cloth rear top patch of the cap is decorated with a white felt badge in the shape of the Prince of Wales's feathers and coronet. The cap has a linen lining, and a leather bottom band. A painted canvas cover is provided to protect the cap in bad weather. The use of cords and tassels on the cap has not been documented, so they are not used on the re-created uniforms.

For fatigue duty, a forage cap of red wool with a blue cloth front is standard. Many styles and variations of the British Army forage cap of

the day have been illustrated, and officers of the re-created regiment decided to allow different patterns since no one specific type could be documented.

The soldier's hair is combed back and braided in a three-plait queue, tied with black ribbon, and turned up to tuck under the cap. Enlisted men did not wear side-curls. White wigs are ordered for dress occasions.

#### Smallclothes

The Fusilier's basic uniform consists of smallclothes including a shirt, waistcoat and breeches. Waistcoat and breeches of wool or linen were worn, but in the re-created regiment linen is specified for enlisted men due to considerations of availability, cost, and the fact that most activities take place during the warmer months.

The shirt is of linen, full cut, with ample sleeves, which button at the cuff. The 'pullover' style shirt has one or two buttons at the throat. A neck stock of black horsehair with a brass clasp is worn in the field. A black velvet stock is customary for dress occasions.

The waistcoat is sleeveless and without pockets, tailored to fit snugly, and fastening down the front with 11 or 12 small regimental buttons. Breeches are tight about the legs but cut very full in the rear, allowing the soldier to sit without pulling the bottoms of the legs over his knees. They are secured at the knee with four small regimental buttons and a brass buckle. Bennett Cuthbertson, in his *System for the Complete Interior Management and Oeconomy of a Battalion of Infantry* (Dublin, 1768 & 1775), states in his Article XV that 'Buckles to knee bands of a soldier's breeches are improper, both on account of the expense, and because their tongues are perpetually wearing out the straps . . .'. Since he argued against the practice, it must have been known; and since most period paintings show them, the RWFIA wear them. The breeches have buttoned flap pockets, a falling front, and







**Left:**

*Front and rear views of a Fusilier of the RWFIA wearing full marching order, with haversack, canteen, and white goatskin knapsack.*

rear cord adjustment.

White stockings are held up by leather garters worn just below the knee. The shoes are very different from those worn today: 18th-century shoes were made on a straight last and could be worn on either foot. Surprisingly, these are comfortable; and very practical, since by alternating them from foot to foot each day they can be made to wear longer. Due to modern logistics both straight-last and right-and-left shoes may be found on the feet of the re-created regiment, fastened with brass buckles.

*The Coat*

The symbol of King George's soldiers in the Colonies was, of course, the garment that gave the 'lobsterback' or 'red-coat' his nickname. The long, frock-length coat of brick red wool is cut to approximately mid-thigh length. The 23rd, as a Royal regiment, wear blue facings at lapels, collar and cuffs.

Tailored according to the Warrant of 1768, the coat has a falling 'cape' (collar), and cuffs which are smaller than seen on previous uniforms. The coat is cut to fit snugly across the chest and arms, but without restraint. It is held together over the chest by two hooks and eyes. In cold weather the lapels may be buttoned across and the cuffs turned down for additional warmth. The white wool lining shows at the turnbacks, which are secured with hooks and eyes and decorated with blue wool appliqué hearts which also reinforce these corners. The turnbacks can also be lowered to give extra protection to the legs in bad weather. A single shoulder strap is fitted to the left shoulder, to secure the strap of the cartridge box.

Pewter buttons are ornamented with the Prince of Wales's crest over the Arabic numerals '23'. Each regiment had its own particular lace,

*continued on page 24*





F

(B) The Colours and Grenadiers of the 23rd Regiment of Foot, Royal Welch Fusiliers in America, parade at Fusilier's Redoubt, York-

town, the scene of one of the actual regiment's most creditable engagements during the Revolutionary War.



E

B



(C) Lace details; clockwise from bottom left: Fusilier or Grenadier ranker, sergeant, drummer, ranker, officer.

(D) Changing the Guard at the Royal Governor's Palace in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; Fusiliers at left, sergeant and drummer at right.

(E) Light Infantry Company private.

(F) Foreground, a Grenadier working on his kit in camp: note match-case. In the background can be seen (left) men wearing a variation of the forage cap — this cannot be documented to the 23rd, so a certain latitude is allowed within the RWFIA. This type has a blue flap with white '23', red crown, and single lace 'loop' set vertically on the left side. Centre background is a corporal — note shoulder cord. The 'wedge' tents, 5ft. 6in. wide by 6ft. 6in. long and 5ft. 6in. tall, were issued one per five men; duty details, sickness, casualties and the other chances of war meant that three or four men at most usually shared the tent at any one time.

C



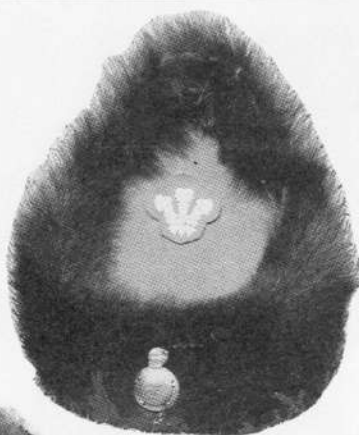
D







**Above:**  
Fusilier corporal, showing white shoulder-knot. Top right, a Grenadier's hanger is just visible — note two-branch hilt.



worn in rectangular, bastion, or pointed rectangular shaped 'loops'; the 23rd's is rectangular. The lace is white worsted twill tape with, for the 23rd, red, blue and yellow stripes woven into it. In addition to the buttons and lace 'loop' buttonhole decorations on the lapels, cuffs, collar, false pocket flaps, and edging on the shoulder strap, four pieces of lace and two buttons ornament the back of the coat.

One or two functional pockets may be sewn into the lining in the tails of the coat. To protect the red wool during fatigue duties, the coat is worn inside out. Some examples are half-lined with linen for wear in warmer climates.

#### *Equipment*

On campaign the soldier wears a 'waist carriage' consisting of a whitened buff leather belt and frog for the bayonet, secured by a brass buckle. A cartridge box of black saddle leather is suspended from the left shoulder to hang behind the right hip on a 3in. wide strap of whitened buff leather. The box contains a wooden block drilled for 24 or 36 paper cartridges containing pre-measured powder and ball for the musket. The box may also contain a wooden or tin compartment underneath the

block, for spare flints, leather and lead foil flint-holders, cleaning patches, and small tools. A small pouch is sewn to the outside front of the cartridge box underneath the flap, for carrying the Y-shaped musket tool. A recent addition to the re-created cartridge box is a striking brass plate in the shape of the regimental device with a scroll reading 'Ich Dien' — the Prince of Wales's motto.

Maintenance of the musket while firing is performed with a small touch-hole pick and brush, attached to the shoulder belt by a piece of chain.

From the right shoulder is slung a linen or canvas haversack containing personal items such as tobacco, pipes, playing cards, etc. as well as the rations and eating utensils. A tin canteen slung over the same shoulder carries water, or other refreshment. The rest of the soldier's personal kit is carried in a white goatskin knapsack.

Long blackened canvas or linen gaiters protect the legs, prevent pebbles from getting into the shoes, and help hold the shoe on in muddy conditions by a strap beneath the instep. The gaiter has 18 black horn buttons down the outside, and a black leather garter with a brass buckle

#### **Left:**

Grenadier, showing the wings on the coat shoulders and the matchcase on the cartridge box belt; and rear of a reproduction of the Grenadier cap, showing regimental badge (here, worked on a separate patch

sewn to the cap) and white metal Grenadier's back-badge.

#### **Below:**

Left side of a reproduction Light Infantry cap, showing the cockade, button, bearskin tuft and white plume.







Regimental and proof markings engraved into the barrel of a working musket; these are taken from an original barrel now at Colonial Williamsburg, Va.

below the knee. White linen wraps are worn over the breeches and under the gaiters above the knees, to protect the breeches from the blacking compound. As the re-created regiment represents a transitional period, the older all-cloth gaiters are worn rather than the style with leather top sections prescribed in the Royal Warrants.

Corporals wear a white cord on the right shoulder. Sergeants are identified by coats made of better-quality scarlet material of a more vivid shade. The sergeant's buttonhole lace is solid white, rather than of regimental pattern. He wears a waist-sash of crimson worsted wool with a blue central stripe, its ends tasselled; this is worn over a double-frog waist carriage for his bayonet and a model 1742 brass-hilted 'hangar' or short sword. This latter has a 25in. long single-edged straight blade and a single knuckle-bow; overall length is 31 inches. In other Line regiments sergeants were armed with halberds. Ser-

geants of Fusiliers carry fusils (pronounced 'fuzees'), which are .69 calibre, 39in.-barrelled versions of the 'Brown Bess' musket.

#### Grenadier Company

In a period when the average man's height was about 5ft. 7in., the Grenadiers, selected from men of at least 6ft., were giants. Today's Grenadier cap rises 2in. taller than the Fusilier equivalent. In addition to the regimental badge on the rear patch, it bears a pewter flaming bomb device stitched to the cloth, complete with the stamped numerals '23'.

The Grenadier's coat is distinguished by cloth 'wings' at the shoulder, with additional lace ornamentation. The heart turnback-corner reinforcements are replaced by flaming bomb shapes. An ornamental brass match case on the cartridge box sling recalls the earlier period when a piece of burning slowmatch was carried to ignite the primitive hand grenades of the early 18th century. The Grenadier has a double-frog

waist carriage holding the bayonet and a model 1751 hanger, which differs from the sergeant's 1742 pattern in having a two-branch basket hilt. The Grenadiers wear the older style pewter buttons in place of black horn buttons on their gaiters.

#### Light Infantry Company

The Light Infantry Companies within Line battalions were a relatively recent innovation in His Majesty's army, developed as a result of experience during the French and Indian war — the American campaigns of the Seven Years' War, when Light troops were raised and trained in open-order tactics. Instead of a bearskin, the Lights wear a small, light leather cap. The front plate is red with a white border, bearing a painted regimental crest with white feathers and gold coronet over the Roman numerals 'XXIII'. The cap has a bearskin crest or roach, and a black ribbon cockade on the left secured by a regimental button. A red cloth turban and white plume com-

#### Above:

Cartridge box, with contents: drilled wooden block with cartridges; tin box for tools, spare flints, muzzle-plug and cleaning patches, with a musket ball at bottom right, and — just visible — the chain for the picker and brush. The brass plate on the flap was discovered in a rear view of a sentry painted as one of five watercolours by Lt. Richard Williams of the 23rd Foot during the occupation of Boston in 1775, and now in the possession of the British Library. In 1980 a plate matching this description was excavated, together with several buttons of the 23rd, near New Brunswick, N.J.

plete the cap.

The uniform coat has short tails with small turnbacks. As in the Grenadier Company, 'wings' adorn the shoulders. The waistcoat is of red wool rather than white linen. Instead of long gaiters, the light infantryman wears half-gaiters with pewter buttons, shaped to a point at the rear of the calf.

Accoutrements and straps are of black leather. The cartridge box is smaller than that of the other companies; and its black shoulder belt has an oval brass plate engraved with the regimental crest and '23'. The double-frog waist





White wool blanket (issued one for each two men), with a haversack and its contents. Clockwise from left, these carefully reconstructed items are: wooden 'burl' bowl, tin plate and cup with knife, fork and spoon (pewter), spectacles with wooden box, tobacco and pipe pouch, rolled-up canvas cap cover, playing cards (note: no numbers printed on corners), money pouch and dice, shaving brush, razor, clasp knife, wooden comb, musket muzzle-plug made of scrap wool tied around a pebble, and brush for clothes, hair and cap.

#### Right:

Knapsack and contents, clockwise from left: striped ticking breeches or overalls for heavy fatigue duty, spare shirts, knapsack with spare musket lock and tin penny whistle, bottle of liquid pipeclay for whitening leather, soap-ball in cup with rag, piece of beeswax for sewing-thread, and straight-last shoes with spare stockings inside.



carriage takes the bayonet scabbard and a belt axe or tomahawk. A bugle-horn is used to transmit commands in the woods.

(Historically, the Light Company of the 23rd Foot underwent the most traumatic changes in 1775. After the Battle of Charlestowne Heights only five soldiers

survived unscathed. The company missed Cornwallis's southern campaign because Gen. Clinton ordered the various Light Infantry and Grenadier companies brigaded as Flank Bat-

talions in New York. They transferred south just in time to go into garrison at Gloucester, across from Yorktown, Va., where they endured the siege and subsequent surrender of 1781.) **MI**

**To be continued:** Part 2 will cover officers, musicians, pioneers, surgeons, and camp-followers; and will describe the organisation and activities of the re-created regiment.



# REVIEWS

**Osprey Men-at-Arms and Elite series:** MAA all 48pp, 8pp col. illus., approx. 40 b/w illus., £4.95 ea.; Elite all 64pp, 12pp col. illus., approx. 50 b/w illus., £5.95 ea.; available in case of difficulty direct from George Philip Services, Freepost, Littlehampton, W. Sussex BN17 5BR (plus 15% P&P)

## Published January:

**Elite 21 'The Zulus'** by Ian Knight, plates Angus McBride, and **Men-at-Arms 205, 'US Army Combat Equipments 1910-88'** by Gordon Rottman, plates Ron Volstad. The most substantial work yet from this impressive young author, whose expertise is respected by specialists but deserves a wider reputation, this very readable, authoritative Elite book covers the Zulu nation from Shaka to the 1906 rebellion. It is balanced, detailed, and full of specific information. The photos are excellent, and include many early rarities. Mr. McBride's colour plates are predictably superb, given this artist's love for and knowledge of Africa. Highly recommended.

Uniform collectors of a more modern taste will welcome Mr. Rottman's neatly organised guide to US Army personal webbing and packs since their introduction before the First World War; we confidently expect to see this book in the hands of browsers around militaria stalls at rallies, fairs and auctions from now on. Clear, concise descriptions and identifications cover the M1910; M1912/14 Cavalry; M1917/18; Second World War improved 1910; M1956; M1967; ALICE; and IIFS equipments, together with linking transitional items, to give a consistent and continuous picture of the development of the GI's harness from 1910 to the present day. Photos are of variable standard technically, but mostly good. High praise is due to Mr. Volstad for his plates; it must have been hard to integrate partial soldier figures with the absolute mass of 'laid out flat' webbing, but he has managed it with clarity, and very attractively. These occasional 'non-standard' MAA books can be among the most valuable of all.

## Published March:

**MAA 206 'The Hanoverian Army of the Napoleonic Wars'** by Peter Höfschroer, plates Bryan Fosten.

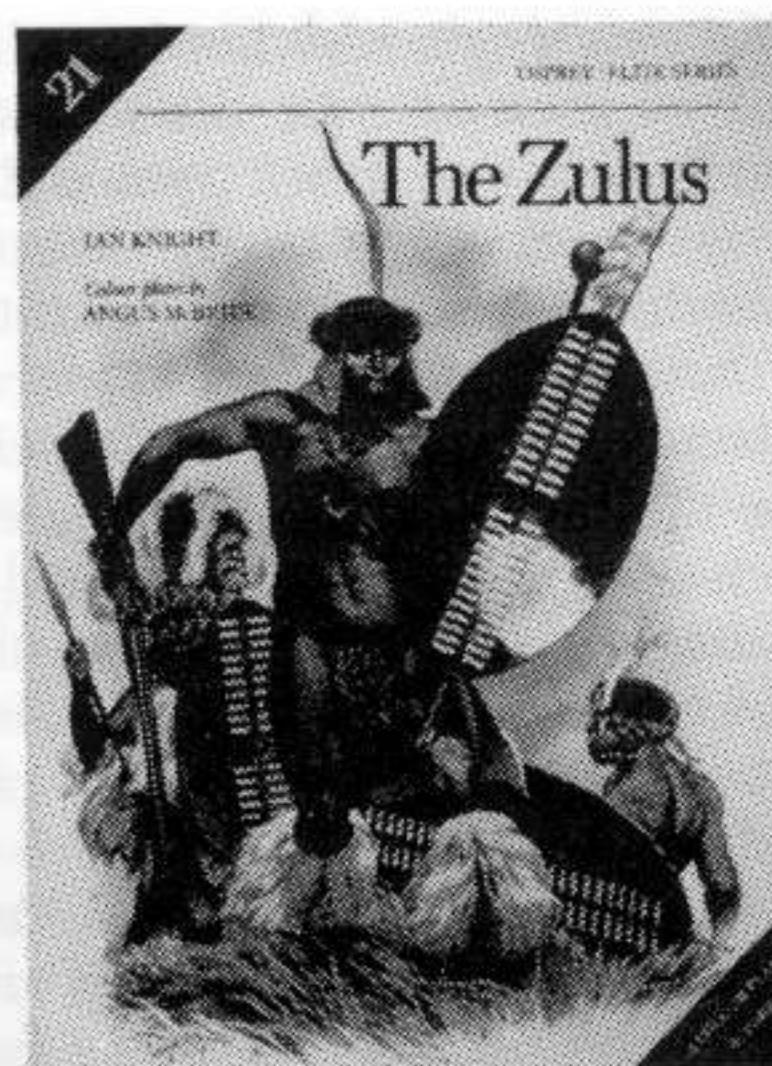
A compressed guide to the armies of 1792-1803; the King's German Legion; and the post-liberation army of 1813-16, including many units which fought at Waterloo. The first and last sections are the most useful and interesting; but the Fosten brothers included a good deal of detail on the KGL in their MAAs on 'Wellington's Infantry', and the less well-known periods repay study. Photos are of variable quality, some well-known already, and the naïf Ronnenberg studies of pre-1803 regi-

ments are probably the best value. Mr Fosten's plates are as bright and attractive as ever.

**MAA 207 'American Civil War Armies (5): Volunteer Militia'** by Philip Katcher, plates Ron Volstad. The text lists, state by state, the volunteer militia units existing at the outbreak of war, and their subsequent service, identities, amalgamations and lineages; together with a brief description of their uniforms. The photos are — as we now expect from Mr. Katcher — a most interesting and valuable collection of period portraits, with a few shots of groups and formed units. The 'fancy dress' uniforms, chosen for flaunting in peacetime and taking the most flamboyant foreign originals as models, almost defy belief — Mr. Volstad's very attractive plates are adazzle with 'Highlanders', bearskinned 'Guardsmen', 'Zouaves', even 'Hussars' encrusted with gilt frogging. A fascinating addition to the reference shelf.

**MAA 208 'Lawrence and the Arab Revolts'** by David Nicolle, plates Richard Hook. Subtitled 'Warfare and Soldiers of the Middle East 1914-18', this departure from Dr. Nicolle's normal medieval hunting-ground is an unusual and interesting title. It 'headlines' T.E. Lawrence's Arabian campaign, for obvious reasons, but goes much further: details of all First World War activity in the Arab world, from the Sahara to Iraq, will be found here. The colourful plates are mostly of tribal types, and European-equipped Arab levies of various kinds. If your knowledge of the Great War is limited to the Western Front and Gallipoli, this book will open your eyes. Some of the photos are very rare, and evocative — a couple of them look like stills from David Lean films...

**MAA 209 'The War in Cambodia 1970-75'** by Kenneth Conboy & Kenneth Bowra, plates Mike Chappell. A clear guide through the confusing 'alphabet soup' of armed groups whose mutual hostility in the end condemned a beautiful country to the horrors of the Pol Pot regime. Both American authors have first-hand background knowledge of SE Asia, and their text seems to us a model of clarity and good organisation. The photos, mostly personal snaps, vary in standard of reproduction, but are mostly acceptable, and interesting. The uniform plates include some unusual subjects, clearly identified — the sort of solid reference for which we look to Osprey. Mr Chappell's usual care over exact colour shades is, as usual, not matched by the fidelity of the printing process used, but the plates are still attractive and valuable. An unusual subject, which we didn't know we needed until we saw how well it could be covered: thanks, Osprey, for still being able to surprise us.

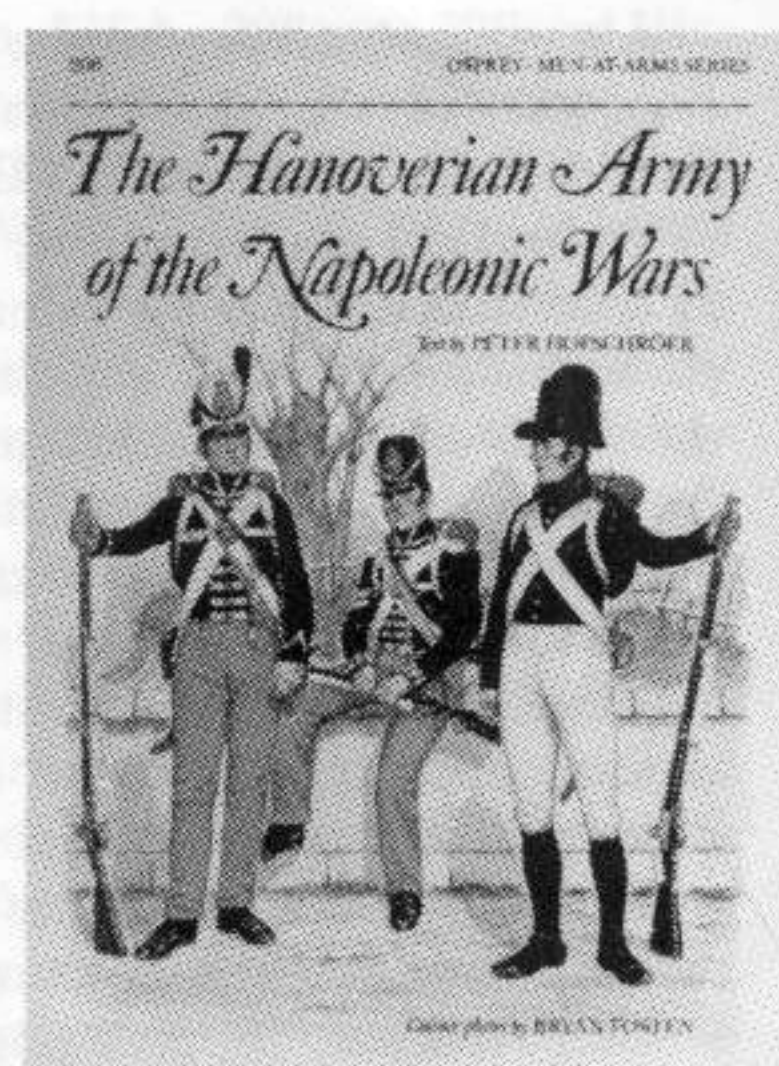


**Elite 22 'World Special Forces Insignia'** by Gordon Rottman, plated Simon McCouaig. An astonishing amount of information is crammed (in smaller type than usual) into this regionally-arranged summary of the 'special forces' of no less than 57 countries. Readers note: not included, UK, USA, Warsaw Pact, Israel, whose relevant units are covered elsewhere in the Osprey lists, noted helpfully in a footnote in this volume. The author makes a useful assessment of exactly how 'special forces' should be defined; then gives notes on raising, past service, and current organisation of such units in the armies of about a third of the total UNO membership! The photos are of variable technical quality, and in subject matter are a bit of a 'lucky dip': some hardly justify inclusion, others are interesting surprises. The plates, by an artist new to us, are equally variable: some are very good indeed, some fairly crude. But the sheer mass of information, written and pictorial, is breathtaking: Mr. McCouaig's crammed plates contain 72 head-and-shoulder figures, and 125 badge 'patch' views. Very good value for money, and recommended. JS

## THE ZULU WAR

Having been to some extent in the doldrums since the centenary in 1979, the Anglo-Zulu War is enjoying one of its fits of activity in the publishing world, with two new popular histories, a re-issue of an old popular history, and a reprint of one of the classic eyewitness accounts.

This latter is undoubtedly the most worthwhile. **Charles Norris-Newman's 'In Zululand With the British'** (343pp, 9 line engravings; £16.50) is the first in a series of reprints from **Greenhill Books** of important contemporary accounts long almost unobtainable to general readers. Norris-Newman was the Special Correspondent of *The Standard*, and the only professional journalist present at the start of the war. He accompanied Chelmsford's Central Column during the Isandlwana campaign, being out with the general on the day of the battle. He later accompanied the Eshowe Relief Column, being present at Gingindlovu, and was the first man to reach the besieged garrison.



His book falls into two parts: his own rather gossipy account of his adventures, and extensive quotes from official reports of those battles which he did not witness. It has the fault which one might expect of a first-hand account written shortly after the event — the author was no critic of Imperial policy; the Zulu perspective is shadowy, to say the least; and many stories now known to be rumours are included as fact.

All this is far outweighed, however, by the author's extremely detailed eyewitness descriptions, particularly of the Isandlwana campaign, for which he is a major primary source. His account of the night spent on the battlefield is both harrowing and poignant. The meticulous tactical information recorded in the official statements is also very valuable. The book also describes aspects of the war — such as the attempts to find a new landing site on the Zululand coast — which have been overlooked in more recent histories. This facsimile reprint has a number of additional illustrations from *The Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*, together with their idiosyncratic contemporary captions.

Sadly, the two new works have less to offer. The best is **'Rorke's Drift'** by James W. Bancroft (Spellmount; 168pp, 16 col. and 123 /w illus.; £18.00), which is very attractively produced, and includes some excellent, previously unpublished portraits of the VC winners from the Royal Collection. It is about time someone took a cool, hard look at a number of aspects of this battle which need explanation, particularly on the Zulu side. This book opts instead for a straightforward narrative which will delight fans of the film *Zulu*, but which repeats some myths rather than unmasking them. It is not true, for instance, that the Zulus used rifles taken from the Isandlwana dead at Rorke's Drift, since these Zulu regiments had been held in reserve and had had no opportunity to loot the camp. Much of this account seems unsubstantiated; and there is a carelessness over details — Lt. Melvill's name is mis-spelled throughout, and many of the picture captions are inaccurate. It is a curiously old-fashioned treatment, apparently taking little account of the more recent and thorough studies of the source material from both sides. There are some nice uniform illustrations by Richard Scollins.



Also disappointing to the present reviewer is **'Like Lions They Fought'** by Robert B. Egerton (Wiedenfeld & Nicolson; 244pp, 21 b/w illus.; £14.95). A professor of anthropology and psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles, the author proclaims his intention of examining the conflict in terms of its effects on the soldiers concerned. This is manifested in a certain uncritical concern for the Zulu position; a great deal of odd stuff about sexual attitudes in the different cultures; and a picture of the British Army as foppish popinjays, based on a use of evidence which seems, to say the least, surprisingly selective. This runs directly counter to the recent studies by Jackson and others who have sought to explore the growing professionalism which emerged in the post-Crimea military generations.

The bulk of the book is a straightforward narrative, littered with too many inaccuracies to list here. Suffice it to say that this was not 'the last Zulu war', as the cover blandly states; it was not the last war in which the British wore scarlet; neither British nor Zulus refer to the battle of Nyezane as 'Victory Hill'; the 1st King's Dragoon Guards is not a Guards regiment; and so on. The maps are minimal; that of Isandlwana shows the mountain as the only terrain feature, and marks the 'last stands' in the wrong places. Two of the illustrations are reversed. The book is clearly aimed at the US market, and there are several fatuous comparisons with the American West. We are told that Lt. E. Anstey, 24th, looked like Custer; and that both the Sioux and Zulus were finally broken by officers named McKenzie — as if these trivia were significant.

Finally, there is David Clammer's **'The Zulu War'** (David & Charles 'Battle Standards' paperback; £3.95). First published in 1973, this is an unpretentious popular history which owes much to Donald R. Morris's classic but dated *The Washing of the Spears*. It adds little to our knowledge of the war, and recent research has overtaken many of the battlefield accounts, notably Isandlwana; but it reads well and, with reservations, is a reasonable introduction to the subject.

**'The Battle of Ulundi'** by John Laband; Shuter and Shooter; 56pp; 17 b/w illus. 4 maps; p/bk, R10.10

**'Cetshwayo's Dutchman'**, by Cornelius Vijn; Greenhill Books; 196pp; 9 b/w illus; £13.95

John Laband is surely now established as the leading academic historian on military aspects of the war, and is best known for co-authoring *The Field Guide to the War in Zululand*. This is the third in his series of slim paperbacks, published in association with the KwaZulu Monuments Council, and is basically a detailed narrative study of the battle of Ulundi, the final battle of the war. There has been a trend recently to dismiss the importance of Ulundi, suggesting that it was merely a ven-

geful *coup de grace* by Lord Chelmsford — keen to erase the shame of Isandlwana — inflicted upon a Zulu army which was already defeated. With his usual meticulous attention to both British and Zulu sources, Laband overturns this view, describing the pressures which compelled both sides to fight, and revealing the shattering impact of the battle, which destroyed the Zulu army, drove the king into exile, and razed the national capital.

This attitude was immediately apparent after the battle to British officers, who, says Laband, found that the 'Zulu everywhere openly acknowledged to the British that their defeat was complete and that the war was over'. The battle itself has also been misrepresented in the past, as an easy and inevitable triumph of British firepower; by drawing out a remarkable amount of tactical detail, Laband points out that this was not the case. In the skirmish on the day before the battle the Zulus had drawn the British patrols into a carefully contrived ambush, and only the skill and experience of Redvers Buller had saved them. At Ulundi itself the Zulu tactics were similarly well-conceived, and at one point a Zulu charge was sustained to within a few paces of the British square, to Chelmsford's serious alarm. Ultimately, of course, volley fire and artillery won the day, and the subsequent pursuit was brutally thorough. *The Battle of Ulundi* is an important addition to our understanding of the war, which restores this particular battle to its rightful place of historical significance.

*Cetshwayo's Dutchman* is not actually a new book, being the second in Greenhill's series of reprints of classic contemporary accounts of the war. First published in 1880, it is the story of Cornelius Vijn, a young Dutch trader who crossed into Zululand in October 1878, and was caught up in the outbreak of war in January 1879. Remarkably, he was not harmed by the Zulus; and when King Cetshwayo heard of him, he extended his royal protection. Vijn was therefore uniquely placed to see the war from the Zulu viewpoint, and he later acted as the king's private secretary in the peace negotiations, translating British messages and writing the king's replies. Obviously, Vijn was kept a long way from the frontline, but his picture of events within the kingdom, of the personalities of important men, of the mood of the country and the rumours which followed each renewal of fighting, is extremely vivid, and remains a crucial source. Roughly half the book is taken up by the Journal itself, the remainder being notes by Bishop Colenso. These include references to a great many incidents not found elsewhere, generally supporting the bishop's view that the war was unjust and British conduct at times inhumane. *Cetshwayo's Dutchman* is essential reading for students of the war. The illustrations have been added from *The Illustrated London News* and *Graphic*. **JK**

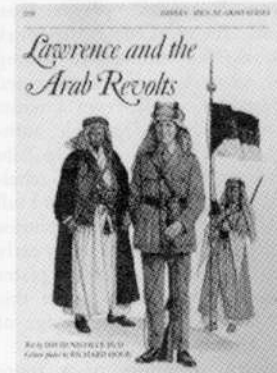
**'An Apache Campaign in the Sierra Madre'** by John G. Bourke; facsimile edn. of 1886 edn. by University of Nebraska Press; 112 pp; 12 b/w illus; p/bk £3.95

The Apache Wars have understandably inspired scores of Western films, partly because of the spectacular scenery of the American South-West and northern Mexico, and partly because the Apaches were such formidable foes, whose mastery of guerrilla warfare has seldom been equalled. The US Army, even the minority who learnt how to fight the Apaches in terrain as inhospitable as any on earth, could never have found their enemy without Apache scouts, whose loyalty and intelligence is a feature of this extraordinary book.



photographs, 15 original plates in b/w (8 by Knötel), 52 line drawings and diagrams; £16.95

This book, originally entitled 'The British Army by a Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army', was first published in English in 1899, having been formerly published in German in 1897. The author, J.M. Grierson, was a highly competent officer who in 1896 was appointed Military Attaché in Berlin, where he found that such were the ignorance and misconceptions among German officers about the British Army that they almost discounted it as a force to be reckoned with. He therefore compiled this book which, in the words of Gen. Maurice's original introduction, provided 'a real service ren-



Gen. George Crook was the most able Indian-fighting general, and he and his officers — including the author of this book, who was Crook's ADC — were on the trail of the notorious Geronimo in the spring of 1883, when this thrilling and fascinating campaign took place. Interestingly, Crook, who relied on and was admired by his Apache scouts, wished, as Capt. Bourke wrote, that the American army raised native regiments like those of the British.

Bourke is an excellent descriptive writer, and a penetrating critic of the politicians and, indeed, scoundrels, who were responsible for so many of the Apache outbreaks, which lined their pockets. It is impossible to recommend this book too highly. Bourke went on to write his monumental *On the Border With Crooke*; but his earlier book is an ideal introduction to the Apache Wars for those who have little detailed knowledge of those small, ferocious, sometimes epic encounters set in some of the most rugged terrain on earth. 'No Indian has more virtues and none has been so truly ferocious when aroused,' wrote Bourke of the Apaches. A notable foreword by Joseph C. Porter relates the aftermath of the campaign — a wretched story — while the book itself is a facsimile of the original, complete with original illustrations. **RM**

**'Scarlet to Khaki: The British Army on the Eve of the Boer War'** by Lt. Col. James Moncrieff Grierson; facsimile reprint with new preface by Col. P. S. Walton; Greenhill Books; 262 pp, 30 b/w

dered to our influence in diplomacy abroad.'

The work is a most comprehensive and detailed examination of the Army's rôle in the closing years of the 19th century, its organisation, dress and equipment, tactics, training, administration and conditions of service, including not only the Regular Army, but also the Yeomanry, Militia and Volunteers. It is hard to think of any other work which deals so fully and clearly with every aspect of the Army at one period of its long existence. Of course, the Boer War revealed that the Army as then constituted required changes in many respects to fit it for a major European war — changes that were satisfactorily effected between 1902 and 1914 — but Grierson's work dealt solely with facts as they were at the onset of the last of the Victorian wars, and as such is an invaluable record.

Copies of the original English edition, bound in the khaki drill material worn by our troops then being sent out to South Africa, have long been difficult to find, and then only at a substantial price. This new edition, with a preface and an additional Appendix, 'Further Reading' by Col. P. S. Walton, Secretary of the Victorian Military Society and author of the two-volume 'Simkin's Soldiers', is therefore greatly to be welcomed. Col. Walton and the publishers, Greenhill Books, deserve congratulations for producing such a handsome facsimile, which not only has all the original illustrations and diagrams — although Knötel's coloured uniform plates have had to be reproduced in monochrome — but also an improved and more representative collection of photographs.



This book has something for everyone interested in the British Army of the period, ranging from more popular subjects like tactics, dress and weapons down to the more mundane, but hard to find details of pay rates, military prisons and schools. It is a splendid testimony to the painstaking industry of a most gifted officer, who later tragically succumbed to a heart attack at the peak of his career, just as he was about to assume command of the British Expeditionary Force's II Corps in 1914.

MJB

**'From Sepoy to Subedar: the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram written by himself, edited by James Lunt, illustrated by Frank Wilson; Macmillan Papermac; 187 pp., 34 line drawings, 4 maps; p/bk £6.95**

This is the first paperback version of the 1970 edition of this military classic written by an Indian soldier of the East India Company's Bengal Army which, translated by Lt. Col. Norgate of the Bengal Staff Corps, was first published in 1873.

Sita Ram, a high-caste Hindu of farming stock, enlisted in the Bengal infantry in 1812 and served in the Gurkha, Pindari, First Afghan and both Sikh Wars. He received seven wounds, was taken prisoner in Afghanistan, and rose through the ranks to become a native officer (jemadar) in about 1848 when he was nearly 60. He soldiered on until 1860, remaining true to his salt when the Bengal Army mutinied in 1857; but that tragedy — in which he nearly had to execute his own son for joining the mutineers — and the very different Indian Army which succeeded it, left him dejected and somewhat disillusioned, a sad end to a long and honourable career.

For obvious reasons, there is a dearth of first-hand evidence about what life in the Bengal Army's ranks was really like for the sepoys, so that Sita Ram's account is not only a fascinating and entertaining read but also a most valuable record. Furthermore, because of the preference, after the Mutiny, for enlisting as sepoys the 'martial races' of the north instead of the Hindus of Oudh and Behar who had long filled the Bengal regiments, it is also a picture of a type of Indian soldier who, notwithstanding the Mutiny, had given long and faithful service but who, post 1860, hardly featured in the Indian Army.

In this edition Sita Ram's narrative is much enhanced by Gen. Lunt's lucid explanatory notes; while the marvellously witty drawings of the late Col. Frank Wilson, himself an Indian cavalryman whose knowledge of India, its soldiers and their uniforms is reflected in his work, help to bring Sita Ram and his comrades vividly to life. It is good to see this famous book in print again.

MJB

**'A Journal of the Russian Campaign of 1812' by Lt. Gen de Fezensac, trans. and with an introduction by Col. W. Knollys; cxxi & 189 pp. with map; reprint**

of 1852 edn. by Ken Trotman Ltd., Unit 11, 135 Ditton Walk, Cambridge CB5 8QD, 1988; £12.50

Readers of this magazine will know of the high opinion entertained by this reviewer of the series of reprints issued by Ken Trotman Ltd., and this latest volume is no exception.

The Duc de Fezensac (actually Raymond de Montesquiou, though this identity is not mentioned in the book) was originally one of Marshal Berthier's aides-de-camp at the outset of Napoleon's disastrous expedition to Russia in 1812, but was appointed to command the 4th Line Regt. after its colonel, Massy, had been killed at Borodino. His account concentrates upon the period after his assumption of command of this regiment, an account compiled from his private journal, 'a simple relation of that which I saw, and of that which happened to me', without any pretensions of analysing the campaign in general. In this it is especially valuable, for it presents a rare account of the tribulations and emotions of a regimental commander in this most appalling of campaigns, the retreat from Moscow which annihilated the most powerful army ever assembled during the Napoleonic era. Fezensac does not entirely forsake analysis, however: he notes in particular Napoleon's inability to grasp the true predicament in which his troops were placed; and is loud in praise of Marshal Ney, in whose rearguard the 4th Line served, and whose indomitable spirit was largely responsible for the salvation of what shattered remnants were able to stagger home from Russia.

Even that spirit flagged on occasion: Fezensac recalls a wounded Frenchman calling on the Marshal for succour; in despair Ney replied, 'What would you have me do? How can I help you being a victim of

sac compares his departure and return home, the former in full panoply with glory on the horizon; the latter wrapped in a wolf-skin and seated on a dung-cart. Small wonder that he prefaced his account with a quotation from the *Aenid*: 'I live not by my fault/I strove to have deserved the death I sought'.

The present volume, however, has a double interest, in the inclusion of a very lengthy introduction by its translator William Thomas Knollys. As the book contains no reference to his career, it may be of interest to note here that this officer, who commanded the Scots Guards (1850-53), was sometime Viscount Wallingford (until his father's claim to the title Earl of Banbury was disallowed), and a Guards officer in the latter stages of the Peninsular War. His introduction is thus written from the viewpoint of an experienced officer, and comments on Charles Napier's distrust of military history written by civilians. Presenting the overview of the campaign not given by Fezensac, Knollys shows the expected prejudice ('We have known men that could not tell a lie. Napoleon could neither speak nor write the truth'); but he nevertheless writes a valuable essay which incorporates extracts from Russian sources, notably *Memoires des... Ludwig Freiherr von Wolzogen* (a German in Russian service); and even injects some of his own Peninsular reminiscences, itemising the kit of the Scots Guards at 75 lbs. to prove that the Frenchman's load was lighter. Especially interesting is his comparison of the rapacious habits of the French with those of the British, citing the occupation of a French chateau by his regiment in 1814, which they quit leaving 'not one article displaced... not even a cabbage-stalk without its head'.

Knollys' introduction thus gives

**Station, USA; 208 pp; 39 b/w ills, 5 maps; index; hardback; UK price not marked.**

'Long Walk Through War' is based on the diary kept by Dr. Huebner while serving with the 88th Infantry Division in Italy. Though the author is now retired it has all the vitality of a young man's view of life and war. He is honest about himself and the men with whom he served — brave and fearful. With a doctor's eye he describes a colonel developing combat neurosis — before the battalion is actually in combat. His comments about stress in World War II are as valid now as they were then: 'The sick and wounded always beef first to their doctor. Once hurt, they express their sincere opinions. The insult of being wounded suddenly makes them very talkative... I always know more about battalion morale than the battalion commander'.

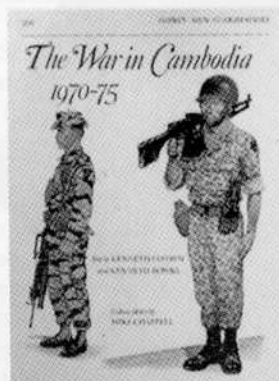
An intriguing twist to the book is that Huebner was born in Bavaria and came to the United States when his father emigrated. He briefly describes the difficult world of financial insecurity and academic pressure through which he worked to become qualified as a doctor before World War II. This tough background and his own strength of character seem to have helped him through 334 days of combat with what was the first selective service division to be committed to combat in Europe.

EWWF

**'Britain's Maritime Heritage: A guide to Historic Vessels, Museums and Maritime Collections' by Vervan Heal; Conway Maritime Press, London; 127 pp; 45 b/w ills.; 2 maps; p/bk, £4.95**

In a magazine such as this, references to Britain's maritime history are necessarily few. So too are reliable, cheap and conveniently-sized guidebooks to categories of museum. It is, therefore, an unexaggerated joy to unite and remedy these two forms of neglect in a review of this recently-published guidebook. Its author, Vervan Heal, was until last year a member of the Department of Archaeology at the National Maritime Museum, and her compilation of this guide reflects not only her training but also her undoubted familiarity with maritime history and its sources. This is no 'Good Museum Guide', however, since such specious subjectivity is all too easy and — as such — remains the purview of the dilettante and self-appointed expert. Rather is it a survey of the maritime collections in Britain which are open to the public, with brief but well-organised notes of their locations, collections and opening hours. It is all that the coat pocket or glove compartment of the nautically-inclined museum visitor could desire, and at a price that should provoke little indecision about its purchase.

All the major maritime collections are here, with — oddly — the notable exception of the naval aspect of the Scottish United Services Museum; and one is amazed by the apparently



war?'. Such sentiments are echoed by Fezensac throughout; he describes his desolation at watching his regiment die before his eyes and being powerless to help men who regarded him as their father and who shared their last crust with him — 'as if I was reserved only to command that I might preside at their destruction'. From 3,000 men the 4th Line was reduced to 200 at the end of the retreat, those actually under arms comprising 'twenty sick officers and twenty half-armed soldiers'. Fezen-

the book a dual value, and it is recommended highly, if only, as Fezensac notes, 'to request my reader to participate in the sentiments with which I close this recital, to share in my admiration of so much courage, and to sympathize with my compassion for so much misfortune'.

PJH

**'Long Walk Through War: A Combat Doctor's Diary' by Klaus H. Huebner; Texas A & M University Press, College**

continued on page 42



# Sudan 1881-98: The Mahdist Patched Jibbeh

IAN KNIGHT

Paintings by RICHARD SCOLLINS

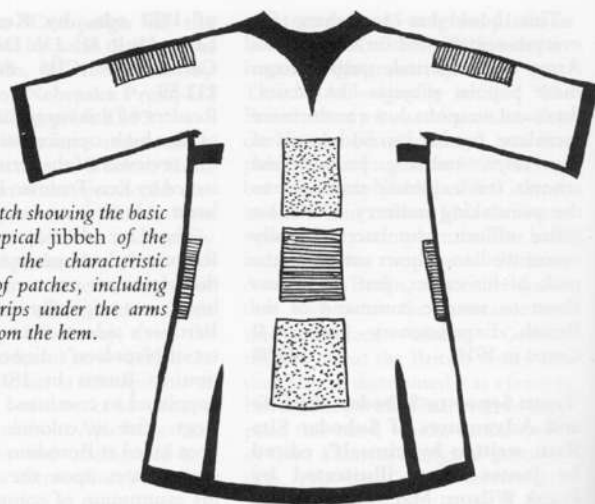
The Mahdist armies which inflicted such traumatic defeats upon British and Egyptian forces in the Sudan, until finally crushed at Omdurman in 1898, are too often represented in popular imagination by the wild-haired 'fuzzy-wuzzy' — the archetype of the fearless, fanatical savage. While certainly fearless, the typical Sudanese *Ansar* was in fact clothed in something approaching a regulation uniform, often factory-made and centrally issued. Interesting surviving examples allow us to reconstruct their appearance in some detail.

In 1881 an obscure holy man, Mohammed Ahmad, a native of the Danaqla tribe of Arabs whose territory lay on the Nile 200 miles north of the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, declared himself to be *al-Mahdi* — 'The Expected One', the successor to the Prophet Mohammed; and declared a *jihad*, or Holy War, against the occupying forces of Egypt. His rise was little short of meteoric. His followers easily defeated Egyptian patrols sent against him, and in 1883 he overran the provincial garrison at El Obeid. An army of 8,000 men under a British general, William Hicks — Hicks Pasha — was defeated so spectacularly that only 300 survived. In 1885 the Mahdists took Khartoum, and with it the head of Gen. Charles Gordon; and the Egyptians abandoned the Sudan to the Mahdi's Islamic revolution. Though the Mahdi himself died shortly afterwards (probably of typhus) his state, the *Mahdiyya*, survived under his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, until Anglo-Egyptian retribution, begun in 1896, smashed it at Omdurman in 1898.

The Mahdi's cause was both religious and nationalistic: it sought to unite the

very different peoples of the Sudan under the umbrella of Islam, in order to drive out the Egyptian oppressor. This in itself was a major achievement, since the Arab tribes — such as the Baggara in the western wastes of the Kordo-

**Fig.A:** A sketch showing the basic shape of a typical jibbeh of the 1890s, with the characteristic arrangement of patches, including the narrow strips under the arms and upright from the hem.



fan, and the Danaqla and Ja'alín on the Nile — were proud and independent; and the Beja people, who lived in the hills around the Red Sea, were largely illiterate, and therefore had only a tenuous grasp of Islam. Nevertheless, the Mahdist cause spread rapidly and gained recruits with each new victory, until at its height it controlled the largest country in Africa and could field an army of 80,000 men.

A full analysis and description of the Mahdist army is outside the scope of this article, but it is important to realise that it varied considerably according to time and place. In the early days, particularly, the armies were regional ones. The Mahdi himself issued directives from his camp, initially in the Kordofan, then at Omdurman across the Nile from Khartoum, and supplied troops from the forces directly under his command as reinforcements; but the tactical decisions were left to local commanders, who drew the bulk of their men from local tribes. Thus the Mahdists who contested the passage of the Gordon Relief Expedition across the Bayuda Desert, at Abu Klea and Abu Kru, were mostly Ja'alín; whilst the Amir Uthman ('Osman') Diqna drew from his own Beja people in the early campaigns around the Red Sea. Although, once the Mahdiyya came of age, particularly under the Khalifa, there was increasing centralisation and uniformity, the regional nature of the army was never fully overcome.

The bulk of the tribal levies were armed with spears and swords, although the Mahdist army did boast a rifle arm, the *jihadiyya*, who were essentially regulars, and used to stiffen the regional armies. The men were mostly black Africans from the private slave-trading armies of the south, or captured Egyptian conscripts. They were largely armed with Remington breach-loaders captured from the Egyptians — 14,000 were



**Fig.B:** A jibbeh taken at Omdurman in 1898, now on display at the Royal Engineers Museum. This is the most common style and pattern.



captured at El Obeid, and many more from Hicks and at each subsequent victory. Although in the early battles Mahdist riflemen were poor shots due to inadequate training, the *jihadiyya* developed into an effective force. The standard Mahdist tactic was to use the riflemen to screen the mass attacks of the sword and spear men, and, on occasions, it was devastatingly effective.

### MAHDIST UNIFORMS

The Mahdi's earliest converts were drawn from the poorest levels of Sudanese society, and wore as a matter of course the *jibbeh*, a white cotton smock which was everyday civilian wear. As it became worn and torn, it was repaired with brightly coloured patches. When, after the fall of El Obeid, the Mahdist army swelled to over 40,000, the Mahdi gave instructions that his followers should wear a particular uniform as a badge of their allegiance; and the patched *jibbeh*, with its associations of virtuous poverty, was adopted. With it, they were to wear white trousers called *siraval*, and sandals, *sayidan*.

The headress was also distinctive, as much a badge of Mahdism as the *jibbeh*: the head was to be shaved and a white skull cap, called *taggia*, worn with the *imma* or turban worn wrapped around it. The loose end of the turban was left dangling behind the left ear, the rest being wrapped so as to leave an inverted 'V' shape over the forehead — rather like a Sikh's turban. In addition, the Mahdi's followers, whom he termed *Ansar*, 'helpers' (the word 'Dervish' being slang imported by the British and used indiscriminately to describe Moslem 'fanatics'), were to wear a *karaba*, or girdle of plaited straw, and a string of brown beads, *sibba*.

It took some time before this directive was adopted by the regional armies. Men with *jibbehs* were spotted by the British at Abu Klea and Abu Kru, but they were almost certainly *jihadiyya* or other drafts from the Mahdi's



**Fig.C:** Another ordinary *jibbeh* from the 1890s — note the 'mattress ticking' appearance of the patch material. The patches are red and blue. This example has a white patch around the collar, rather than a coloured one. Partly visible in the top left-hand corner of this photo is a small child's *jibbeh*. (Royal Marines Museum Eastney, Hants.)

camp. The bulk of the *Ansar* in these engagements wore their traditional cotton robe, the *tobe*, which was gathered around the waist and fastened over the left shoulder. In the Red Sea theatre, in the battles around El Teb and Tamai, the Beja fought in their tribal sections — Hadendowa, Beni-Amer and Bisharin — under their own Amirs. They too wore grubby cotton trousers or robes, and wore their hair frizzed out in the extravagant styles which earned them the nick-name 'fuzzy-wuzzies'. Not until late in 1885 did the Beja begin to shave their heads and adopt the *jibbeh*. Furthermore, early *jibbehs* were different in style to the more familiar later patterns. Some were sleeveless or short-sleeved, and there were fewer, smaller patches. These were often triangular or lozenge-shaped, or sometimes in other geometric patterns. One early Beja *jibbeh* has a red cross made from

thin strips of material on the front and back, and bright zig-zag borders.

By the time of the battle of Ginnis (December 1885), the more familiar later *jibbeh* was in evidence. This always varied in shape and cut, but usually extended below the waist to the knee, stopping well short of the wrists on the sleeves. It is extremely unlikely that, apart from the very early days, the patches were ever sewn on haphazardly; even the early *jibbehs* mentioned above have a strong symmetry of design and style. The patches themselves were simply oblong or square pieces of brightly dyed cloth. It must be assumed that the vast majority of ordinary *Ansar* wore simple *jibbehs*, but those which survive are surprisingly well made. There are no less than 14 on display at Blair Atholl, the castle of the Dukes of Atholl, recovered by the 8th Duke, who served with Kitchener's

cavalry in the Omdurman campaign; and many more in regimental museums around the country. Most are very well made. It is, of course, probable that these were brought back as souvenirs precisely because they were particularly fine examples of the type; but nevertheless, the cumulative evidence suggests that by the late 1890s, at least, the standard of *jibbeh* manufacture was quite high.

### Typical patterns

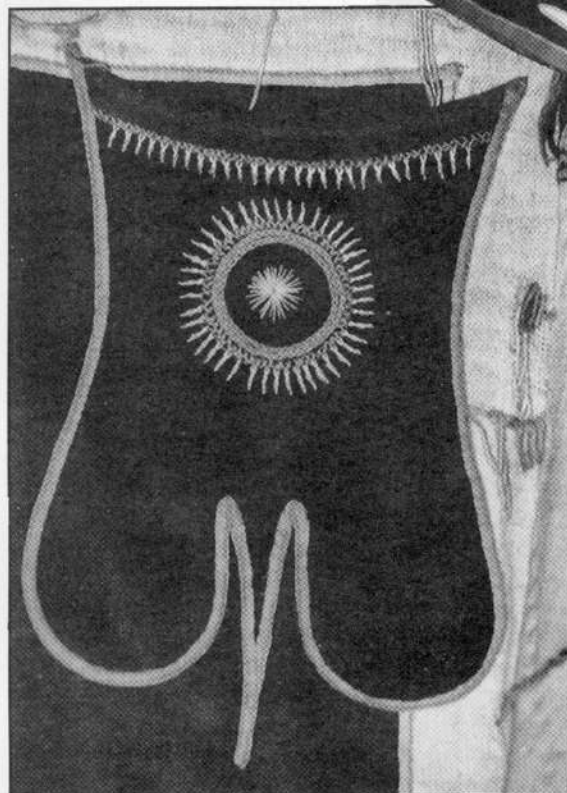
The arrangement of patches was symmetrical, a typical pattern being one patch around the throat, coming to a point over the chest; one patch on the outside of each sleeve; two or three patches on the front and back; and one patch on each side of the skirt. The patches themselves could be square or oblong, and the size varied from *jibbeh* to *jibbeh*. It was quite common for the circular neck opening, the edge of the sleeve, and the bottom of the skirt to be decorated with a thin coloured strip. The main colours for the patches were red, black, and medium blue, although dark and sky blue were common, and green, khaki and even yellow were also used. Material from captured Egyptian uniforms was sometimes cut up and recycled for patches, as was a striped material resembling mattress ticking. Patches were often edged with a thin strip of a contrasting or complementary colour — a yellow trim around black patches, red around green, or light blue around dark blue. Some *jibbehs* display additional arrangements of thin horizontal or vertical strips — narrow horizontal bands under the arms, or vertical ones over the shoulders or pointed upright from the hem.



**Fig.D:** A particularly ornate Amir's jibbeh from the Blair Atholl collection. This displays almost the full range of patches, trimming, edging and embroidery; note particularly the breast and side pocket designs, and the embroidery on the strips under the arms.

**Below:**

**Fig.E:** A close up of the breast pocket design of D. The stitching is yellow and white: note that the white cotton material of the jibbeh itself seems to be heavily worn, in contrast to the neatness of the patching.



Initially, the Ansar made their own *jibbehs* but, after the fall of El Obeid, the Mahdi set up factories to cope with the influx of new recruits. As the Mahdiyya became more centralised, so the issue of *jibbehs* became more regular. Provincial garrisons returning to the capital might receive new *jibbehs*, and they were also issued for the periodic parades that took place at Omdurman. It is possible that distant provinces, such as Equatoria in the south, may have had their own *jibbeh* factories.

#### Units and officers

This may account for the apparent uniformity of some *jibbeh* patterns. It is unlikely

that Mahdist units were distinguished by uniform *jibbehs*. There are reports suggesting that the different tribes wore *jibbehs* with the same patterns — the Baggara with red and black patches, for example, and the Ja'alin with blue — but as these were the most common colours, it is an improbable explanation. Certainly, several *jibbehs* from the Dongola province survive; they may not all have come from the dominant Danaqla tribe there, but even so there is little uniformity. In any case one would expect the regular units, such as the *jihadiyya*, to be more likely to have had uniform *jibbehs*, and this was not the case. Most likely any surviving *jibbehs*

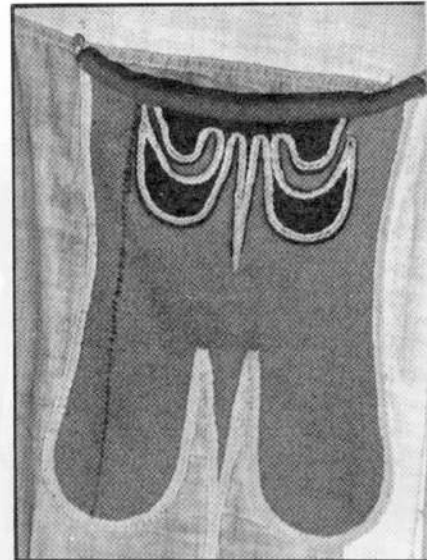
with a uniform design were simply made to a common pattern by the factories.

Only one unit is known to have worn uniform *jibbehs*: the *mulazimiyya*, the Khalifa's bodyguard. These were largely men drawn from the *jihadiyya*, and may have represented an attempt to further regularise and centralise the army. The *mulazimiyya* contained both riflemen and spearmen, and were probably the best-trained unit in the army of the 1890s. They wore a loose-fitting *jibbeh* with blue patches around the neck and on the front and back, and red patches on the sleeves and sides. They also wore a red waist sash, and a red *imma* in a

distinctive style, with the loose end draped under the chin and over the right shoulder.

The organisation of the Mahdist army was quite complex, reflecting the mix of regulars and tribal levies. The Mahdi had initially divided it up into three 'flags', reflecting its regional nature. The Red Flag drew its men from the riverine Arabs north of Khartoum, the Black Flag from the desert tribes of the Kordofan, and the Green Flag from the area south of Khartoum between the Blue and White Niles. Diqna's Beja do not seem to have been attached to any particular flag. After the death of the Mahdi the Black





Flag, commanded by the Khalifa's brother Yaqub and based at Omdurman, emerged as the main regular army.

Outlying garrisons tended to comprise local levies with a stiffener of regulars. The standard tactical unit was the *rub*, or 'quarter', which varied in strength between 800 and several thousand, but usually averaged between 800 and 1,200. As its name implies, the *rub* was divided into four sections, one administrative and three combatant, roughly the equivalent of battalions. Each battalion comprised levies, who rallied to the flag of their own Amirs, and regulars, who were organised in companies of 100,

further sub-divided into sections of 25 men.

It is not quite clear how the Amirs required to officer these units were distinguished. Some surviving Amirs' *jibbehs*, and photographs of Mahdist commanders—notably Mahmud wad Ahmad, the unsuccessful commander captured at Atbara—show distinctive breast and side pocket designs, and these may have been a badge of rank. Those on the breast pockets were usually of a contrasting colour to the background patches, and edged along the top opening. They were often neatly embroidered with patterned stitching. Those on the side pockets

were usually of a dark colour and shaped like a 'spade' motif; these too were often edged, and covered with neat, close embroidery.

Generally, the clearest indication of rank was probably the complexity of the *jibbeh* pattern and the quality of manufacture. The most ornate Amir's *jibbehs* show the fullest variety of patches, strips, edging and embroidery. Not that high rank always justified an extravagant *jibbeh*, however: the Royal Green Jackets Museum has a *jibbeh* said to have been taken from the body of the

Above:

**Fig.F:** Another Amir's *jibbeh* at Blair Atholl, of a rather more simple design. The main patches are light blue. The 'notched' strips across the top edge of the sleeve appear on many well-made *jibbehs* of the period.

Above left:

**Fig.G:** *Jibbeh* with blue patches, Blair Atholl. It is interesting to compare F and G with D: all show the characteristic features thought to denote rank, but there can be little doubt of the superiority of D.

**Fig.H:** Close-up of the breast pocket design of G. The background patch is pale blue, the pocket khaki, with yellow and black patterning.







**Richard Scollins' colour reconstructions opposite:**

(1A) and (1B) show a Mahdist Amir in a typical jibbeh of the 1890s. The jibbeh is the same, but we have attempted to show some of the possible variations in other aspects of his appearance. (1A) shows a black African — such men were usually from the south, and many were recruited from the large trained private slave- and ivory-trading armies which dominated the area. He carries a broad-bladed stabbing spear, and wears his imma, waist girdle and sandals in accordance with the Mahdi's dictates. Note the designs on the breast and skirt pockets. (1B) is an Arab, and wears a waist sash in preference to the girdle; contemporary photos and sketches suggest this was a common practise. Many Ansar went into battle bare-headed or wearing just the skull-cap. He carries a throwing spear, and his sword, carried on a sling over the shoulder, is of characteristic Sudanese design.

(2) shows the breast pocket design in detail. This shape of pocket and pattern of embroidery are typical, although the colours varied.

(3) shows the 'Khalifa's jibbeh', now on display at the Royal Greenjackets Museum in Winchester. Although there is some doubt as to who actually wore it, it is nonetheless the jibbeh of a man of very high rank. The pattern is simple, but the quality of construction, particularly the edging of the patches and skirts, betrays the importance of the wearer.

(4) represents a jibbeh of the *mulazimiyya*, the only unit in the Mahdist army known to have worn jibbehs of a uniform pattern. It is cut rather more fully than many ordinary jibbehs.

(5) is an ordinary jibbeh; for most of the Ansar, variations on this simple pattern would have been the norm. Blue, black and red were the colours most frequently used for patches.

(6) is the jibbeh of Yusef Angor, an Amor of the Baggara who held a command in the *jihadiyya*. It was taken from his body after the battle of Firka (7 June 1896) and is now on display at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. He also wore a red imma, an indication of his high rank and the fact that he was part of the regular forces of the Black Flag.

Khalifa himself after his death at the battle of Um Dibayk-arat in 1899. (Photographs of the dead Khalifa and his generals confirm that it was removed from one of the bodies, although there is a

question over the identification of the Khalifa; however, it clearly came from a man of the highest rank.) It displays a fairly simple pattern of light and dark brown patches, edged in blue and grey. Pre-

sumably senior Amirs felt it necessary to wear unostentatious *jibbehs* as symbol of their humility. Some important Amirs also wore the red imma.

## Mail

Finally a word about 'chain mail' armour, which caught the imagination of the British troops at the time, and has continued to do so ever since. Certainly ring mail shirts and steel helmets were recovered in the Sudan campaigns, and there are many examples in regimental museums. Some may have been taken from dead Amirs after battle, but this is very unlikely: their function was largely ceremonial. They were worn in the grand parades at Omdurman. Most of the captured examples were taken from Mahdist camps or from the arsenal at Omdurman, which was extensively looted. When mail was worn, it was worn over a brightly coloured quilted coat. This was not strictly a *jibbeh*, though it was similar in shape, but rather longer in the skirt, with a slash front and back to facilitate riding. Most of these coats were white with large coloured sections, although they were not patched like the true *jibbeh*. Some surviving examples are ornately decorated with wavy stripes. **MI**

## Below:

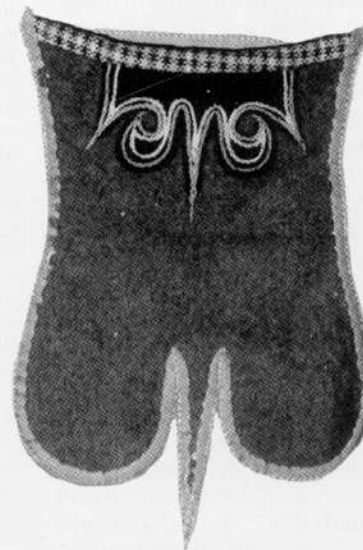
**Fig.K:** Another breast pocket design. This photograph shows up the stitching of the patches well. (Blair Atholl).

## Above:

**Fig.I:** An ordinary jibbeh at Blair Atholl. Note that the strips under the arms have been made with striped material. Note also the sword.

## Right:

**Fig.J:** The patches on this jibbeh are very pale khaki. This example is unusual in having a breast pocket on the right breast. (Blair Atholl).





# Reconstruction: Roman Legionary, 1st Century BC

PETER CONNOLLY  
Photographs by JOHN HOWE

These photographs show some examples of the reconstructed Roman legionary equipment prepared for a re-enactment of a Roman march over the Alps from Verona, Italy to Augsburg, Germany in May 1985, which was carried out by Dr. Marcus Junkelmann and eight other would-be legionaries. The master examples for the armour, weapons and other equipment were made by the respected Nottingham armourer Michael Simkins.

This is a legionary as he would have appeared at the beginning of the Roman Empire, c.15BC: a time when the traditional equipment of the later Republican period — the curved oval shield, 'jockey cap' helmet, mail shirt, and long-pointed thrusting sword — were still in use.

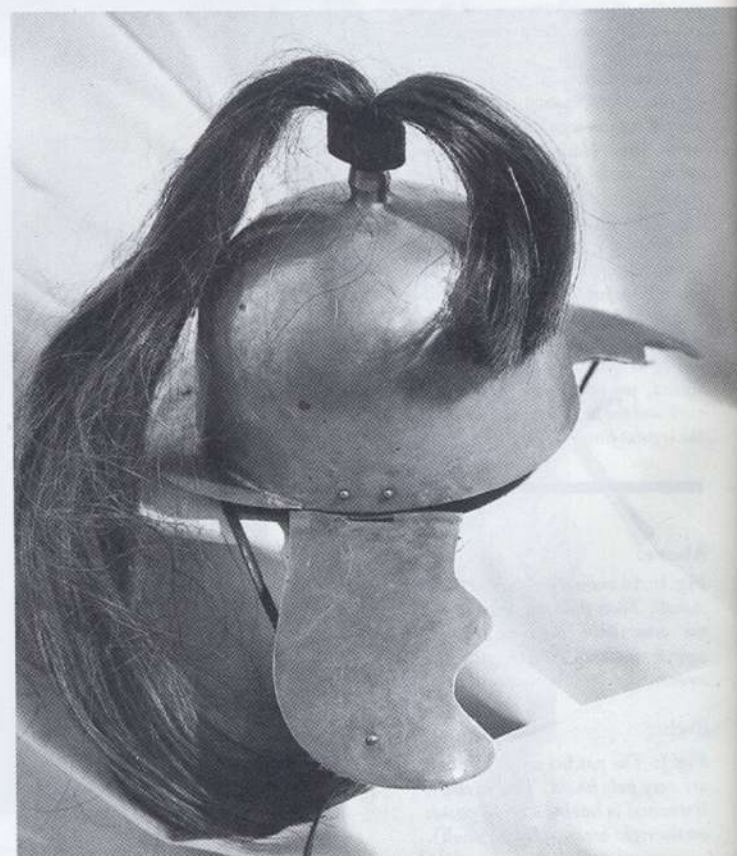
This legionary would be equally appropriate in the great wars of the 1st or even 2nd century BC: defeating the Macedonians in 168BC; besieging Carthage in 146BC; or slaughtering the Germans in the armies of Marius at the turn of the century. Pompey and Julius Caesar would have been equally familiar with this soldier, the workhorse of their campaigns. In short, this was the legionary who conquered the world.

He continued his career of conquest unabated throughout most of the reign of Augustus (27BC-AD14), pushing the Roman frontier up to the Danube, and deep across the Rhine into Germany. The great era of expansion, and the immediate dream of extending Rome's frontiers to the Elbe, only came to an end in AD9, with the annihilation of the XVII, XVIII and XIX Legions under P. Quinctilius Varus. This legionary is, equally, the soldier who died wretchedly in the Teutoburg Forest in that traumatic disaster, which cost Rome one-tenth of her regular infantry, and convinced the

ageing Augustus to withdraw from most of Germany and call a halt to Roman military expansion in Europe. **M**

**The helmet** is of the type often loosely called the 'jockey cap'. This type originated among the early Celts. A large number of iron and bronze examples were found in the 4th century BC Celtic cemetery at Montefortino, near Ancona in Italy, and from these finds the type received its more exact title of 'Montefortino'. These helmets were adopted by the Romans and other Italians during the 4th century BC, and became the most successful and long-lived Roman helmets. Somewhere in the region of a million of them must have been made during their 400-year span. The Roman examples, which have been found as far afield as Spain, Germany and Turkey, are made of bronze and sometimes tinned. Fitted with a horsehair crest, and sometimes feathers, the helmet was secured by two straps attached to the neck-guard which crossed under the chin and fastened to the cheek-pieces. The helmet was designed specifically for defence against Celtic slashing weapons.

**The mail shirt** (lorica hamata) seems also to have been adopted from the Celts, the earliest example coming from a Celtic grave at Ciurmești in Romania, where it was found in conjunction with a Montefortino helmet and greaves. The Romans were certainly using mail by the early 2nd century BC. This particular type, with the large shoulder-guards, appears on 1st and 2nd century BC Celtic sculptures from France. The type was adopted by the Roman cavalry, and can be seen on many Roman cavalry tombstones. It is uncertain to what extent this design was used by the legionaries, but it certainly appears on the tombstones of some standard-bearers. The double hook fastener which was used to hold the shoulder-pieces down at the chest is typically Celtic; a mail shirt with such a fastener, dated to the 2nd century BC, was recently found in a Celtic chariot burial in Yorkshire. This type of shirt, extending down over the hips, weighed 12-13 kg, and contained some 40,000 separate rings.









**The shield** (scutum) is based on the only surviving example, found at El Faiyum in Egypt. It was made of thin strips of birch laminated to form a three-ply wooden shield, with the grain running horizontally in the middle and vertically at front and back. The shield, which was thicker at the centre than at the edges, was covered with lambswool felt, doubled up along the edge and stitched through the wood. The reconstruction has a bronze rim (a common find on Roman sites in the West); and a bronze boss cover (based on an iron example found at Mainz, Germany) reinforcing the wooden boss underneath.

This was, in effect, a body shield, covering the standing legionary from calf to shoulder, as demonstrated in the colour photograph. When the soldier crouched slightly in fighting position, it gave him total protection. It had a horizontal hand-grip, and was generally held with a straight arm — as if carrying a suitcase; it was not normally wielded like a light buckler, as its 8kg weight would have obliged the legionary to fight from behind it rather than parrying with it. It was very effective against the Celtic slashing sword, the resilient curved sides absorbing much of the force of an off-centre blow.

Several leather shield-covers have been found in the Netherlands and Switzerland. These appear to have been stretched over the front of the shield rather like a fitted sheet, being secured with straps.

**The Spanish sword** (gladius hispaniensis) was a short weapon, its blade seldom longer than 50cm, with a long point. It was made of pattern-welded crude steel. This weapon was adopted from the Spaniards in the 3rd or possibly even the 4th century BC. Essentially a thrusting weapon with a reinforced point, it was the weapon par excellence for the Roman fighting tactic, defeating all comers from Hannibal to Vercingetorix. It was the combination of the curved body shield and this vicious, super-efficient weapon that enabled the short Roman,

with his limited reach, to force his way in to close quarters and gut his larger Celtic foe. Its long, reinforced point and slight 'waisting' behind the point made deeper penetration possible, and it was even capable of rupturing mail. This type of sword was abandoned during the second half of the 1st century AD in favour of a shorter-pointed weapon. Obviously, with few Italians serving in the army and the Celtic warrior class virtually exterminated, tactics were bound to change.

Several of these swords, complete with scabbards, have been found in the Rhine near Mainz, and the type takes its common name from that city. Handles were made of wood, bone, or even metal. Scabbards were constructed of wood framed with bronze in exactly the same way as their 4th century BC Spanish ancestors. Slung on the right side of the body, possibly because the curved shield made drawing from the left difficult, they were tied or strapped to the belt by four scabbard-rings.

The legionary carried his **cooking and eating utensils** with him. Examples of bronze cooking pots, a sort of refined bucket complete with handle, have been found all over the Roman Empire. Innumerable saucepan-like mess tins (paterae) have also been found. Both of these can be seen carried by the legionaries marching out at the bottom of Trajan's Column. Bronze spoons and bone-handled knives are common finds; but water canteens are very rare. The iron and bronze reconstruction shown here is copied from an extremely well-preserved example found at Rainau-Buch in southern Germany. A fragmentary example was also found at Newstead in Scotland.

#### Acknowledgements:

All photographs John Howe, © Time Machine. Our thanks for co-operation to Gerry Embleton and A. Guttman.





# Reconstruction: Waffen-SS Infantry, Eastern Front, 1944

Photographs by  
KEVIN LYLES & PETER AMODIO

The photographs on the following pages show original uniforms, camouflage clothing, personal equipment and weapons compatible with Waffen-SS infantry serving on the Russian Front in the second half of 1944. They are published for the interest of collectors, and other students of the period, in as near as reasonably possible to a natural and lifelike setting. The models who gave their time to make these photographs possible are private individuals, for whose patience and generosity we wish to record our gratitude; they are not members of any kind of group or association.

The majority of the items illustrated form part of the collections of Andrew Steven and Peter Amodio, to whom we extend our thanks for making this feature possible; the more so, given that the very high prices demanded for original items of this sort nowadays mean that each individual 'soldier' posing in this muddy setting is wearing a set of clothing and equipment representing an investment of perhaps £2,500 to £3,000. As far as can be confirmed through careful examination by experienced collectors and dealers, all the items illustrated are of original wartime manufacture apart from some minor pieces — e.g. some of the wool gloves, modern *Bundeswehr* toques, etc. — added to give extra realism.

Thanks are also due to: Hills Small Arms, for access to some of the rarer items, including weapons; the 'Skirmish' organisation, for access to private property, in the interests of convincing terrain; Regimentals, of 70 Essex Rd., and Military Antiques, of 27 The Mall, Upper St., both London N1,

continued on page 42

## Captions to colour photographs overleaf:

(1) The helmet cover, shelter-quarter and smock show variations on the autumn/winter 'oakleaf' pattern camouflage. There were many variations of colour, and attempts to find some significance — either in terms of seasonal or regional issue, or unit peculiarities — are quite unrealistic. The majority of the smocks, made of reversible, waterproof cotton/linen duck, had a 'spring/summer' pattern on one side and an 'autumn/winter' on the other. Greens, ochres and pinkish-browns were lighter on the former, and darker browns, oranges, darker greens, even black and violet, predominant on the latter; these have been classified for the assistance of collectors by Borsarello & Lassus (op.cit.); but their use was promiscuous, and it seems to have been unusual to find a man wearing the same variant on all three camouflaged items.

This man, firing a captured Russian PPSH41 (prized for its high-capacity 71-round drum magazine), and with two 'stick' grenades lying handy with their caps removed and the china weights of their friction-cords exposed for instant use, displays typical assault harness. Clipped to the D-rings of his Y-straps is the webbing 'A-frame' or 1939 Sturmgewepäck. The mess-tin (Kochgeschirr) is fixed sideways at the top, with one strap; below this, two straps secure the rolled shelter-quarter (Zeltbahn); below this is attached the olive canvas bag which held immediate necessities — tent rope, weapon cleaning kit, one or two days' iron rations, a sweater, etc. Slung round the body to hang on the left hip is the gasmask canister (Gasmaske und Tragbuchse); attached to the rear of the belt is the bread-bag or haversack (Brotbeutel), with such items as the washing and sewing kits, eating implements, Esbit field cooker, and field cap; and clipped to this is the water-bottle (Feldflasche).

(2) This rifleman carries the standard K98 Mauser 7.92mm rifle; five-round clips are carried in the two sets of triple black leather pouches (Patronentaschen) each side of the belt buckle, almost obscured in this pose. An Eierhandgrate is clipped below one set; and he carries link for his squad's MG42 light machine gun round his neck. The 7.92mm ammunition box had a thin metal handle which made it painful to carry in the unprotected hand for any length of time. Tucked into his belt is his 1943 Einheitsfeldmütze with late insignia, the death's-head and eagle worked on a single triangular patch. The

SS variant of the national insignia is repeated on the left sleeve; this four-pocket camouflaged drill jacket was the only camouflaged garment on which its use was authorised<sup>(2)</sup>. This man still wears field-grey trousers and 'dice-shaker' marching boots (Marschsstiefel); a mixture of this early legwear with the later ankle-boots and web anklets would be feasible in 1944. The helmet cover is of a later war pattern with foliage loops; note the 'envelope' at the front, fitting under the front brim of the helmet. Strapped around his assault pack is an interesting blanket. Its markings show it to be of Red Army issue, captured, restamped with Waffen-SS labels, and re-issued at Kiev in 1943.

(3) Close-up of the same rifleman loading his K98 with a mixture of normal and armour-piercing rounds. This shows more clearly the rifle pouches; and details of the helmet cover, with rear foliage loops, side and rear spring hooks, and the lighter, greener 'spring/summer' side showing at the edge.

(4) A machine gun 'No.2'; his smock lacks foliage loops, its cut suggesting earlier rather than later manufacture, and has the so-called 'plane tree' pattern. This has rounded dots of colour; in some cases, as here, black was added over the greens and pink-brown of the basic pattern. The helmet cover and shelter-quarter seem to be in a spring/summer 'oakleaf' pattern. The field equipment is unremarkable; though note gasmask cape (Gasplane) strapped in its satchel to the gasmask canister. The most interesting item is the pack, which has been described elsewhere as the 'SS assault pack', though its identification purely to the Waffen-SS seems questionable.

Lack of contemporary photographic evidence has called into question the degree to which it was ever issued during the war. A sequence of photographs does exist, however, supposedly showing elements of 5.SS-Pz.-Div. 'Wiking' in Pomerania in the last months of the war, in one of which this pack can be seen slung outside a Hanomag SdKfz 251 half-track. This raises the further question of whether it was issued with shoulder straps enabling it to be worn without the Y-straps (Koppeltraggestell), to the D-rings of which it is clearly intended to fit. This pack was supposedly developed late in the war to replace the

1939 assault pack, which was unpopular due to its lack of carrying capacity. An example with the covering flap actually in SS camouflage material has been seen, but there is no supporting photographic evidence for its date.

(5) A sniper takes aim during street fighting. He is armed with the gas-operated self-loading Gewehr 43, the semi-automatic rifle issued in small numbers late in the war and used primarily by snipers and other specialists. All examples had the mountings for the ZF4 telescopic sight. Note the ten-round detachable box magazine. Hurriedly manufactured and issued, the G43 was prone to malfunctions due to poor materials and workmanship; men who used it needed more than the average soldier's armourer skills, and plentiful spares.

(6) A soldier crouches in a fox hole, awaiting the approach of Soviet armour with a 100mm Panzerfaust. This example still has the white instruction label attached. The holes in the flip-up sight mark different ranges; the far side of the sight is treated with luminous paint for night use. This heavy weapon, with twice the original charge, needed to be rested until the last moment to avoid unsteadiness when aiming. Note the violet black and ochre of this version of the autumn/winter camouflage pattern. The 1944 suit was not available in sufficient quantity to replace the old smocks in the front line units, and a mixture of items was to be seen until the end of the war.

(7) A good view of the smock, here of later pattern, with buttoned skirt pockets (the earlier batches of the Tarnjacke lacked these, and had only buttoned vertical slits on the ribs, for access to the field uniform beneath) and foliage loops. This is a spring/summer 'oakleaf' pattern. Note particularly the rare double pouches for the detachable magazines of the G43 self-loading rifle, worn on the left of his belt; and the late-war webbing Y-straps. Characteristically, he wears one set of standard pouches for loose clips, to be used for loading the scarce magazines. These blueish G43 pouches are lined with the more usual beige 'red stripe' material; other G43 pouches are beige inside and out; and the blueish canvas with black leather fittings is also seen in some MP40 pouches.









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Another view of the model photographed on our front cover. He wears the two-part camouflage-printed uniform of herringbone twill material — Drillich — manufactured during 1943 but not issued until March 1944<sup>(1)</sup>. The cut of the four-pocket jacket and the trousers resembled that of the wool field uniform. This outfit was only produced in a single camouflage pattern, the so-called 'pea' pattern of small, regularly-sized, almost round spots. Borsarello & Lassus illustrate surviving samples which show a considerable contrast in shades — one having an overall pinkish-brown appearance, the other with stronger ochres and greens — but there is not thought to be any significance in these variations. The drill material, unlike the duck used for the early camouflage smock, was neither waterproof nor reversible. There was no central issue of a camouflage helmet cover in this pattern, though some may well have been improvised in the front line; more common was to see the older pattern cover worn with the 1944 uniform, as here — one of the autumn/winter 'oakleaf' patterns. The cover photograph shows a number ('5') printed on this. This is one of the numbers printed in pairs along the edges of rolls of camouflage cloth before they were cut up to make shelter-quarters, smocks and helmet covers; if possible, shelter-quarters with matching numbers were buttoned together by soldiers in the field, to ensure continuity of pattern.

This photo shows the shelter-quarter — in an 'oakleaf' pattern: no items were produced in the 'pea' pattern apart from the four-pocket drill uniform, and the contemporaneous padded winter reversible suit — strapped to the dull yellow webbing Y-straps (originally produced

for African service but later issued on European fronts), above the bread-bag and water-bottle. The cover photo shows clearly the double set of triple magazine pouches for the MP44/StG44 which our man is firing. These pouches are extremely rare, and the variant illustrated even more so: they are made from the same blueish-stone canvas, with black leather fittings, as the equally rare pouches for the G43 — see photo 7 on the colour pages. While made in several 'ersatz' materials, MP44 pouches are most often seen in beige/tan canvas with a single interwoven red stripe.

for their continuing assistance in locating uniform and equipment items.

In the captions which follow the camouflage patterns are described for clarity using the same terms (e.g. 'oak leaf', 'pea', etc.) as used by J. Borsarello and D. Lassus in their recent photographic booklets *Camouflaged Uniforms of the Waffen-SS Parts 1 & 2* (ISO-Galago Publications, 42 Palace Grove, Bromley, Kent BRI 3HB); but these terms are not in any way official designations. **MI**

#### Notes:

- (1) Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, Nr.5, 1 March 1944, Ziff99
- (2) V.B.L.d.W-SS, Nr.4, 15 February 1943, Ziff.63

## REVIEWS

continued from p. 29

prolific spread throughout Britain of relatively minor nautical museums. A glance at the two maps reveals that, while Wales is a relative desert, the south-western peninsula is positively crowded, from Southsea (the Royal Marines Museum) right around the coast to Bristol (the SS Great Britain). The maps themselves are quaintly chart-like, so that one might almost expect to see the words 'here be dragons', but they need to be nothing else, so precise are the instructions about the museums' locations. Wisely, Miss Heal prefaces her guide with the statement that each museum was largely responsible for providing information about itself in response to a questionnaire; thus are such guides normally compiled and few are the worse for that. Because of her own past connections with the National Maritime Museum, not to mention its pre-eminence in the field, the entry for Greenwich is impressively comprehensive. A lack of such connections, together — one must assume — with a lethargic Public Relations presence, results in a strangely brief entry from the Imperial War Museum (although HMS Belfast is handsomely treated).

Guides such as *Britain's Maritime Heritage* inevitably, and rightly, run into several constantly-updated editions, and it is to be hoped that this one will be no exception. A second edition will undoubtedly contain the few minor corrections which are needed in the first, but none of those should deter any of you from obtaining and regularly using this valuable, and very good value, guide. It is a book that no travelling museum visitor, however occasional, should be without. **SCW**

**'Hanna Reitsch: Flying for the Fatherland' by Judy Lomax; John Murray; 244pp inc. index, biblio, 3 appendices, 35 b&w pics.; £14.95** Hanna Reitsch was one of Germany's most famous and accomplished test pilots during the 1930s and '40s. She was the only woman to be awarded the Iron Cross (richly deserved, given some of the fantastic aeronautical creations produced by Goering's designers), and has earned lasting notoriety as the woman who flew to Hitler's bunker in April 1945.

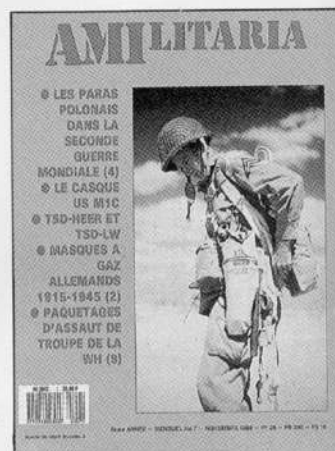
Throughout the war Hanna Reitsch was upheld as the perfect example of Nazi womanhood — though not in the typical *kinde, küche, kirche* mould — and her wartime service suggests that she was committed to the Nazi cause. She never joined the party, however, and one of the recurring themes of this book is the author's defence of Hanna's political naivety. Hanna's upbringing in Silesia had taught her to prize honour and patriotism above all, and this, combined with her fear of Communism, meant that she, like thousands of other Germans, welcomed the decisive leadership provided by Hitler. (She was not over-impressed by Hitler when she actually met him,

and found it slightly disconcerting that the leader of the Fatherland should pick his nose in public.)

She was undoubtedly a highly skilled and very brave test pilot. Overcoming two major obstacles (her sex and diminutive height), she became a record-breaking glider pilot in the 1930s. The peak of her career was her involvement with the rocket planes, notably the infamous Me 163, as well as the piloted V1.

Hanna survived a crash, the flight to and from Hitler's bunker, and intense suspicion about her political leanings (the transcripts of her interrogations by the Americans provide a fascinating appendix) to continue flying and setting gliding records until her death in 1979. She spent the post-war years lecturing around the world, and making friends with other single-minded heads of state — Nehru, President Nkrumah of Ghana and Mrs. Gandhi.

This is a thoughtful and absorbing book that not only tells the story of a remarkable woman, but also provides an insight into German life in the inter- and post-war years. **JHS**



**'AMilitaria' No.6, September/October 1988; and No.7, November 1988; New Fashion Media SA, Boulevard de Triomphe 132, B-1160 Bruxelles, Belgium; 56pp & 48pp respectively, of which 16 and 11pp with colour; each UK £3.00, US \$6.00 (by air), inc. P&P.**

The latest two issues of this unfailingly interesting French-language magazine are to hand, and contain main articles on: (No.6) WW2 Polish para uniforms; WW2 US airborne troops; Wehrmacht specialists and auxiliaries; German gas masks, 1915-45; a WW2 British mine detonation switch; Wehrmacht assault pioneer's equipment; WW1 British cap badges. (No.7) WW2 USAAF flying clothing; WW2 SAARF uniforms; French medals; Wehrmacht foreign volunteers' uniforms; 3rd Reich lapel badges; WW1 German bayonets; and WW2 British ATS uniforms. No.7 marks the first issue to appear monthly, a decision we can only welcome. **MCW**



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342 October 10th and 11th  
343 November 21st and 22nd

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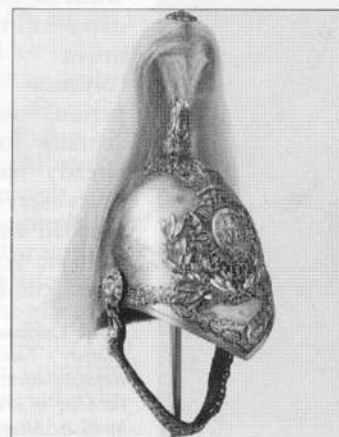
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The story of Thomas Cochrane, later 10th Earl of Dundonald, more befits the world of Marryat, Forster, or today's writers of nautical fiction<sup>(\*)</sup> than a true history of one of the most unusual officers to serve in the forces of any nation.

Thomas Cochrane was born at Annsfield, Lanarkshire, on 14 December 1775, the son of

Archibald, 9th Earl of Dundonald (1749-1831), and the heir to a distinguished Scottish noble family which had included many notable military personalities. The 7th Earl, captain of the 17th Foot's Grenadiers, had been killed at Louisberg, and a son of the 8th Earl fell at Yorktown. The 9th Earl, however, was of a scientific rather than military inclination, and impoverished his family by his researches; but he had enough influence to secure for his young son Thomas (who bore the courtesy title of 'Lord Cochrane') a commission in the 104th Foot.

Thomas' military career was short; the Earl insisted that he wear a bright yellow waistcoat and breeches (the colour of the Whig party to which the family was attached), which looked absurd with regimental uniform; and as a result the humiliated Thomas entered the Royal Navy instead, as he had always wished. Even while he was in the Army his name had been entered in the muster of his uncle's ship (a common practice of that period) so that when he actually joined in 1793 he already had a falsified five years' service, which greatly speeded his promotion. By 1796 he was a lieutenant, in which rank he had his first

brush with authority, being court-martialled for (but acquitted of) insolence to a superior.

In 1799 Cochrane was serving in the Mediterranean under Lord Keith, who regarded him as troublesome and untrustworthy. Already, Cochrane was becoming increasingly unpopular with the naval establishment for his attacks on the abuses of authority and upon the place-seekers and fortune-hunters who inveigled their way into the system (although he himself had benefitted greatly from one such abuse).

In the Mediterranean theatre Cochrane met Horatio Nelson, who apparently recognised promise in the young officer, and gave him the advice which characterised his career: 'Never mind manoeuvres, always go at them'.<sup>1</sup>

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'SPEEDY'

Appointed to command the brig HMS *Speedy* — probably for Keith to be rid of him — he put this precept into practice. Despite the size of his ship (only 158 tons; 14 small 4-pounder guns, and 90 crew at full complement) he turned the little brig into a formidable fighting machine. In this he showed himself a born leader, whose concern for the welfare of his seamen was, throughout his career, reciprocated in a devotion verging on idolatry.

During the 13 months' cruise of the *Speedy* he wreaked such havoc on French and Spanish shipping in the Mediterranean that he destroyed or captured 50 vessels, and earned the nickname *Le Loup de Mer* (the Sea Wolf). Nor was he merely a commerce-raider: on 6 May 1801 he encountered the Spanish frigate *El Gamo*, and though vastly outnumbered — the Spaniard had 319 crew and 32 much heavier guns, against *Speedy's* 54 of all ranks — Cochrane boarded with his entire crew (less the surgeon, who remained at *Speedy's* helm) and captured the enemy, inflicting more casualties than his entire

ship's complement.

Two months later *Speedy* was overwhelmed by three French ships-of-the-line after three hours' battle, and Cochrane was captured. He was exchanged almost immediately, and on 8 August 1801 was promoted to captain, his fame assured by the unparalleled feat of audacity in capturing *El Gamo*. But as his fame grew, so his attacks on the worst aspects of the naval system made ever more enemies in high places.

He was even more troublesome to the French, however, when given command of the 32-gun frigate HMS *Pallas*, and when transferred to a larger frigate, HMS *Impérieuse*. Raids on the coast of France and Spain kept the area in a ferment, occupying thousands of French troops. Cochrane would double back and forth, landing to raid, demolish bridges, blow up forts, and destroy semaphore stations in operations which more resembled modern commando raids than the conventional idea of naval warfare in the Napoleonic era.

His operations were catalogues of unrelieved success; yet received no acknowledgement save an Admiralty complaint that he was using too much powder and shot! As he wrote, 'the excitement of accomplishing the mischief was my only reward — for I got no other'.<sup>2</sup> For as his success increased, so did his unpopularity with the government. Elected Member of Parliament for Honiton in 1806 and Westminster in 1807, Cochrane was as unrelenting in his attacks on the Ministry as upon the French.

## The Basque Roads

The turning-point of his career was the attack on the Basque Roads in April 1809, when Cochrane was brought in as an acknowledged expert in raids and cuttings-out to devise a plan for breaking the boom and attacking the French squadron sheltering behind it. He used fireships and explosive vessels to blast his way in, causing untold havoc; but the timidity of his



'Lord Cochrane, Captain of his Majesty's Navy and One of the Representatives in Parliament of the City of Westminster': painted by G.E. Stroebling and engraved by Charles Turner, 1809, and showing the undress uniform of a captain of three years' post, with the loose trousers and shoes commonly worn on active service. (The National Maritime Museum, London, to whom the author is grateful for making this portrait available.)

(\*) Devotees of Patrick O'Brian's magnificent novels in this genre will recognise many incidents from the career of 'Lucky Jack Aubrey' in any summary of Cochrane's life.



superior, Admiral Lord Gambier, prevented this success being exploited. Cochrane received the Order of the Bath, but his attacks on Gambier were such that the admiral was court-martialled; Gambier was acquitted, but the Admiralty was no longer prepared to countenance Cochrane's behaviour, despite his brilliance. He received no more employment; and he spent his time 'on the beach' harrying the government over naval abuses, petitioning for greater pensions for injured sailors, and supporting Burdett, Cobbett and the Radical element in Parliament. Ever unconventional, he even began his marriage with an elopement!

### DISGRACE AND PRISON

In 1814 his enemies seized their opportunity for revenge when Cochrane was involved unwittingly in the great 'Stock Exchange Fraud'. Infamous in its time, this involved the duping of the stock market by the announcement of the death of Napoleon, conveyed by a 'staff officer' with despatches from Europe. Government stock rose on the news, the perpetrators sold their holdings at the top of the market, and the value fell as soon as the officer was revealed as a hoaxer. The guilty included the fake courier, the self-styled 'Baron' Charles Randon de Berenger, adjutant of the Duke of Cumberland's Sharpshooters; and Cochrane's criminal uncle, Col. Andrew Cochrane-Johnstone, an ex-slave trader whose command of the 8th West India Regt. had been a cover for embezzlement and the assembly of a private harem.

Though innocent, Thomas Cochrane was implicated and convicted, much to his enemies' delight and perhaps with their complicity. He was jailed for a year (he escaped once, but was recaptured when he tried to resume his seat in Parliament!), and dismissed the service with ignominy.



### To South America

In 1817 Cochrane accepted the offer from the infant Chilean republic to take command of their navy. He remained in their service until 1822 and made an invaluable contribution to their successful revolt against Spain; his capture of the Spanish frigate *Esmeralda* on 5 November 1820 probably equalled anything he had achieved before. In 1823 he transferred his service to the Emperor Pedro I of Brazil, assisting him to throw off Portuguese control; and in 1824 he joined the Greeks in their fight against Turkey — in effect, he was the 'ideal' of the romantic hero, striving to assist the oppressed in gaining independence.

In 1828 he returned home to clear his name; and although he was unable to force the new trial he wanted, he was granted a free pardon in 1832 (though not until 1847 was his Order of the Bath restored). In 1848 his rehabilitation was completed by his appointment as admiral commanding the Royal Navy on the North American and West Indian station, which post he

retained until 1851.

An inventor and scientist like his father, during the Crimean War he resurrected his 'secret plan' for the annihilation of the enemy first proposed in 1812 (by poison gas and incendiary missiles), but it was rejected as too inhuman. His spirit was unbowed, and he claimed that if permitted — even if he had to sit 'in an arm-chair on the poop, with each leg on a cushion, I will undertake to subdue every insular fortification at Cronstandt within four hours'<sup>(3)</sup>. He died as 10th Earl of Dundonald on 30 October 1860, having completed his autobiography, in which he noted that with the exception of the Order of the Bath 'which, as the gift of my sovereign I prize highly, my life has been one of unmerited suffering'<sup>(4)</sup> — a sad comment upon perhaps the greatest sailor of his age. **MI**

### Notes

(1) *The Autobiography of a Seaman* (10th Earl of Dundonald, 1860), I, p.88.

(2) *ibid.*, I, p.286.

(3) *Life of Thomas, Lord Cochrane* (11th Earl of Dundonald & H.R.F. Bourne, 1869), II, p.339.

(4) *The Autobiography of a Seaman*, II, p.399.

*Cochrane in old age: a contemporary photograph. Most of the decorations are those awarded for service to foreign governments, the exception being the Order of the Bath. Cochrane rose to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet, the highest attainable in the Royal Navy, and in October 1854 was appointed to the honorary command of Rear-Admiral of the United Kingdom.*

The reconstructions on the back cover, by Bryan Fosten, show Cochrane as (top) Captain, Royal Navy, c.1807, in full dress. Cochrane was known to favour plain uniforms (as shown in the *Stoehling* portrait), including the use of the loose trousers of the ordinary seamen, but this illustrates the full-dress uniform regulated in 1795, with blue facings and broad gold lace (two rows on the cuffs); captains of three years' post wore two epaulettes, and those of under three years one, on the right. By this date hats were generally (but not universally) worn 'fore-and-aft' by all but the most senior ranks; and Hessian boots were preferred by some officers to the breeches and stockings which were the more official full dress. The sidearm is a typical 'fighting sword' with a curved blade, stirrup hilt and gold-and-blue knot.

(Bottom) As an officer in South American service, 1817-25. Taken from a portrait by Sir George Hayter, this presumably depicts Cochrane's semi-civilian uniform of his own devising, including a blue coat with gilt buttons, voluminous cape, and loose trousers. The floppy shirt-collar with flowing necktie is typical of the romantic Byronic style of dress affected by those of Cochrane's liberal politics.

### Sources

Cochrane's career was sufficiently colourful to produce numerous biographies in addition to his own writings, which were not only his autobiography and *Narrative of Services in the Liberation of Chili (sic), Peru and Brazil* (1859) but also political pamphlets, statements regarding his innocence; and scientific studies, such as a treatise on the use of bitumen and petroleum in Trinidad, and one on the mineralogy and government of the West Indies. His *Life* was written by his son the 11th Earl (see notes); and among the most modern works is *Cochrane: Britannia's Last Sea-King* (Donald Thomas, 1978). The family history in a wider context is examined in *The Fighting Cochranes* (Alexander Cochrane, 1983).



# Thomas Cochrane

*Post Captain,  
Royal Navy, c. 1807*



*In Chilean service, 1820*

